

*Theorizing It: Paris Hilton, the Celebutante, and the It Girl Lifestyle*

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For all those who consider Paris Hilton a dumb blonde.

## Abstract

This thesis examines the American media's representation of the *It* Girl through a case study of the celebute Paris Hilton's lifestyle. Using a combined interpretative and content analysis approach, her wider significance is related to popular discourses surrounding social class mobility. An analysis of the media's framing of her lifestyle in a selection of celebrity and fashion publications reveals that the *It* Girl can transgress traditional notions of taste as a representation of class. These transgressions are assessed in areas of fashion and etiquette and are regarded as enhancing *It*-ness. By applying Bourdieu's theory on taste from *Distinction*, *It*-ness is conceptualized as the highly desirable, media-produced embodiment of Bourdieu's economic, social, and cultural capitals that act as a lifestyle model in American consumerism. As such, the *It* Girl is not an icon of fixed *good* taste as the media's characterization of her image suggests; rather she exhibits competing modes of taste (both good and bad taste). In order to maintain her status and position as a taste-maker, the media restore the *It* Girl's taste through emulation framing and by revaluing (or remarketing) femininity. An analysis of the *It* Girl provokes a rethinking of traditional ideas about the relationship between American taste and class.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION — THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY IT GIRL

At first the phenomenon was considered ephemeral: an It Girl would have a limited run, either rising to greater heights and household recognition or, conversely, her star would diminish. The list of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century It Girls is long, storied, and well-dressed, reaching into the elite upper echelons of society (Talitha Getty, Nancy Cunard) and culling from the ranks of famous faces (Twiggy, Kate Moss) . . . . In the annals of pop culture, images of It Girls loom large, wielding a powerful influence even to this day. (Feldman 126)

Since the mid-1960s' appearance of Andy Warhol's socialite superstar Edie Sedgwick, the American press has been consistently using the It Girl label and reporting on her lifestyle in celebrity and fashion magazines. Talitha Getty, Nancy Cunard, Twiggy, and Kate Moss are but a few examples in a long list of It Girls identified by the American press. According to *Vanity Fair*, the list is also populated by individuals such as socialites Brenda Frazier and Gloria Vanderbilt, actresses Grace Kelly, Rita Hayworth, and Gwyneth Paltrow, and models Penelope Tree and Elizabeth Hurley (Peretz 311-316). The newest twenty-first century It Girls have been identified as celebutantes Paris and Nicky Hilton (Sales 351).

The It Girl's cultural significance is linked to her social class membership and to her taste, both of which are central to her representation in the American press. The combination of her position in the "upper elite" class and her ability to project a notion of being "well dressed," which is indicative of "good" taste, have permitted the It Girl to become a contemporary lifestyle model for American consumers. The aforementioned

excerpt from Feldman's piece in *Nylon* magazine, much like other published articles on It, can identify the women who possess the It factor and can describe how the It Girl lives. However, the article fails to define It-ness or account for the significance of lifestyle in the attainment and maintenance of It Girl status. While Feldman's observation provides some insight into the definition of It—class and taste are central elements—further exploration is needed to augment the dearth of information on this subject in academia and in the American press.

Current and historical commentary misrepresents the status of the It Girl as being comprised solely of elite social class membership and *good* taste, thus provoking a reconsideration of the It Girl and her relationship to taste and class. Contrary to popular assumption, the It Girl represents conflicting or opposing modes of taste and thereby does not signify a fixed position of elite class and taste. As such, she has the ability to transgress traditional notions or boundaries of taste and class. This ability reflects the greater cultural significance of the It Girl wherein her successful transgression is indicative of social mobility or what Foster regards as “class-passing” (7). According to Foster, class-passing has the ability to “display and disrupt the notion of class as an identity marker” and regularly occurs in media texts (7). Therefore the It Girl not only offers herself as a significant lifestyle model for American consumerism, but also as a model for class mobility that has been frequently overlooked by the media and by scholars in the field of celebrity. As a result of this oversight, she has been commonly misconceptualized as a static icon of good taste and an embodiment of the American Dream myth (i.e., a certain lifestyle and status is falsely promoted as being attainable to Americans through consumption).



What exactly is the It factor? How do we define It? Is It merely about conveying an idea or can It-ness be defined by tangible characteristics? What role does lifestyle play in the interpretation and definition of an It Girl and her status? Furthermore, what is the relationship between class and taste with respect to It-ness? Because It does not always consist of good taste, does the impact or role of “bad” or poor taste impede or enhance her It-ness? This thesis aims to answer these questions and overcome current misconceptions about It-ness by examining the elements of the It Girl and assessing her taste-making abilities in relation to broader issues of American class mobility and gender. An exploration of the media’s role is crucial. Accordingly, a combined research method of an interpretative approach and a textual and visual content analysis that focuses on American celebrity weeklies and fashion magazines is employed. The exploration is primarily supported by an analysis of Bourdieu’s perspective on taste that serves to challenge the dominant notion of a classless American society and provides insight into the conceptualization of the It Girl.

Through a case study approach using the celebutante Paris Hilton, this thesis specifically examines the American press’s representation of the It Girl lifestyle. The intention of examining her lifestyle is to theorize the It factor and analyze the class mobility fantasy and the American Dream myth that are related to her lifestyle and taste-making abilities. It-ness is a media-constructed, ideal embodiment of Bourdieu’s three capitals—economic, cultural, and social—that serves as an American lifestyle model. By exhibiting both good and bad taste, the It Girl transgresses traditional notions of taste as a representation of class and offers illusions of class mobility. Her privileged status overcomes taste-related violations that are traditionally considered unacceptable by the

elite, thus preserving the It Girl as an image of good taste in order to endorse social mobility via consumption and to reaffirm the rigidity of American class boundaries.

Celebutantes such as the Hilton sisters have recently emerged as a new category in the historical list of American It Girls. The celebute is a celebrity who is “famous for being famous” or a “socialite/heiress-turned-celebrity” and is commonly referred to as the new twenty-first century It Girl in American media (Allon 71; Davis 72, 74; Mair 2; Oppenheimer 260; “Paris’ (sic) Most Shocking Moments”; Rebello 60; “Society Girls”; “The Hilton Sisters”; “The Hilton Sisters: Queens of Making Money” ; “Trust Fund Babies”; Weinberg; “Young Hot Hollywood”); therefore she reflects a logical choice for the exploration of current It-ness. Hilton, was named “America’s favorite celebute” in June 2007 by *ABC News* (Goldman par. 4), is considered to be one of many celebrities who function as lifestyle taste-makers in American consumerism. Although she is but one of many lifestyle models, she arguably may be considered the primary model within the celebute culture—the result of achieving the highest level of publicity and popularity among all American celebutes.

Hilton is regarded as successfully attaining a position of cultural authority which enables her to enhance the desirability or attractiveness of commodities associated with her image. Her It-ness, facilitated by her celebrity status and elite class background, provides a false notion or fantasy of American class mobility through consumerism. According to Cashmore, although consumers “obviously can’t buy *them* [celebrities],” they can purchase a sense of elite celebrity status as they buy “their representations” and “presence” (3) that are endorsed or associated with the celebrities’ professional and private lives. Upon purchasing these representations and presence, the masses are able to

vicariously experience upward and downward class mobility through celebrities such as Hilton. This suggests that class position in America can be bought whereas in reality American society is still structured in large part by family lineage or pedigree.

This study's exploration of the experience of class mobility will focus on analyzing issues corresponding to status, taste, and gender in relation to Hilton's lifestyle and the subsequent promotion of consumerism found in (the purchase of) celebrity weeklies, fashion magazines, and her own publication, *Confessions of an Heiress* (2004). Her lifestyle and taste-making abilities create the rules and standards in areas beyond beauty and fashion to include leisure activities such as dining, nightlife, hobbies, and the formation of chic cliques (the selection of friends and boyfriends). Therefore the celebutante embodies the It Girl status: the ability to possess beauty, a good physique, style, and attitude, as well as having the ability to appear and associate with the "right" people in the right places. These attributes are crucial in order to receive media coverage because this lifestyle represents the highly desirable yet unattainable or illusory American Dream lifestyle, which in turn permits the celebutante to attain It Girl status and impact spheres of consumer culture. In short, to study the It Girl today translates into examining the celebutante.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives***

This study's central concepts and framework are informed by Bourdieu's work *Distinction* (1979, trans. 1984). It must be acknowledged that the historical context of Bourdieu's study presents a French taxonomy of taste and class that differs from American culture. As Grenfell explains, "A reading of his work therefore needs to be taken against the socio-historic background....: of France emerging from the Second

World War, the growth in modern media and the governmental preoccupation with ‘cultivating’ the people” (96). The French government’s involvement in the cultivation of French citizens and the rigid class boundaries that Bourdieu discusses within his “three zone model” are considered French occurrences and need to be reconsidered within an American framework. American culture and taste is less stratified than Bourdieu’s French society. Mass media plays a crucial role in the organization of American taste due to the centrality of capitalism that has resulted in overtly commercial definitions and standards of taste. By contrast, the classical or performing arts are fundamental to both the constitution and meaning of good taste in Bourdieu’s 1960s French culture.

His critique of taste is considered by some scholars as irrelevant or limited in its application to American society due to its homology approach to consumption and stratification. For example, his work has been criticized on the presumption that distinctions between traditional high and low culture diminished in Western societies during the twentieth century (Bennett, Emmison, and Frow 12-13; Featherstone 92-96) and as a result of findings that suggest his categorization of French class-related tastes cannot fully be generalized to America (Gartman 430-32; Peterson 253-55; Peterson and Kern 900-01). His approach for my study, however, proves to be most useful in articulating the American media’s framing of the It Girl as her representation resembles traditional highbrow and lowbrow dimensions. Thus the press’s representation of the It Girl’s lifestyle and taste justly permits the application of Bourdieu while acknowledging the cultural differences between American and French cultures. Drawing on *Distinction*, the media are considered a site for cultural education that impacts on the habitus and the formation of one’s cultural capital. Moreover, the It Girl as a commodity is regarded as

an objectified form of cultural capital that serves to increase cultural competency within an American capitalist system.

Through an examination of the It Girl's taste, it is proposed that the American media's framing of Hilton's lifestyle legitimates social mobility through consumption. The It Girl is regarded as Foster's notion of a class-passer and offers a fantasy of social mobility due to media framing. Foster writes that "class mobility is at the center of the American Dream, and performance punctuates that dream itself" (8). Her work proposes that consumerism, rather than hard work or labour, is promoted as the means of achieving the American Dream and thus provides illusions of class mobility. She argues that the American Dream can be bought and that mobility can also be experienced through consuming mass media performances (such as watching a film or television). The It Girl's celebrity is articulated both in her professional work and her private life. Each performance is avidly covered by the American press; celebrity weeklies and television programming portray celebrities in ways that evoke an ideal lifestyle and status that they suggest can either be emulated or purchased. By offering simulated experiences in social mobility, the It Girl actually reaffirms and reinforces the rigid class structure.

An analysis of the tactics and strategies used to position her as a cultural educator and figure of emulation will confirm that the It Girl is more complex than a fixed image of good taste because she displays conflicting forms of taste. The privileged status with which the media have provided the It Girl—an ideal lifestyle formulated by good taste and high class—is theorized using Kendall's notion of "emulation media framing" (*Framing Class* 231). Emulation framing is regarded as a means of preserving the It Girl status through its routine focus on selling *faux* mobility through the depiction of

luxurious elite lifestyles. The ability to exert contradictory tastes without damaging the It Girl status becomes representative of the frequently ignored class-passing. These different portrayals of good and bad taste are revalued by the media in order to restore her It Girl status and are constrained by binary notions of taste, class, and femininity. Therefore bad or poor taste as exhibited in an It Girl's etiquette and style seeks to enhance—and not impede—It-ness.

### ***Definition of Terms***

Pure taste, according to Bourdieu, is the binary opposite of “impure,” “vulgar,” “sensational,” and “primitive or lowbrow taste” (*Distinction* 485); therefore it invokes a sense of morality, modesty, and divinity. He explains that it reflects social legitimacy, economic and cultural power, as well as highbrow artistic values typically associated with the elite class. It must be emphasized that I am applying elements of Bourdieu's concept of pure taste and adapting it to American discourses surrounding the It Girl and her taste-making abilities. Bourdieu's understanding of pure taste is a philosophical departure from Kant's set qualities or standards of beauty and taste. Bourdieu claims that taste is dependent on individual interpretation as he argues that taste is directly related to class position and is not innate. Pure taste is constructed within an “artistic tradition” where a “pure gaze” becomes a position of superior elitism, because it breaks away from the “ordinary,” “impure” and thereby from the “popular [French] aesthetic” (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 4). Bourdieu's notion of pure taste is specifically applied to art and traditions within “high” or aristocracy-like French culture and is not identical when translated into American culture. Given the cultural differences between American and French society outlined earlier, it should be evident that I am adapting the basic notion of his pure taste

concept to articulate this link between taste, class, and morality, and applying it to a popular American context for the purposes of analyzing the framing of the It Girl's lifestyle.

Using Bourdieu's "three zones of taste" in this thesis, "pure" taste signifies "legitimate" or good taste and represents the tastes of the old upper-class elites, "middle-brow taste" is representative of the tastes of the new upper-class elites or *nouveau riche* (in this study, it is the class associated with celebutantes), and "popular taste" is considered as representative of all remaining (working and lower) classes (*Distinction* 16). Skeggs argues that Bourdieu's work has an "embodied gendered dialectic" that is "structured through hierarchical relations of difference, symbolized by binary oppositions" ("Context" 22). This gendered dialectic will also be found in the media's representation of Hilton. As such, the American media limit the It Girl's taste to gendered notions of elite taste. These notions are characterized by traditional notions of femininity such as concepts of elegance and modesty.

Traditional femininity is commonly described in America as "ladylike" taste or "feminine standards of decorum and beauty" traditionally associated with the old upper-classes (Marling; Rowe 60, 62). This form of femininity is being applied in lieu of classical "high" French taste in order to attempt to bridge some of the cultural gaps between present-day America and Bourdieu's 1960s France. Traditional femininity in this study will be referring to or attempting to articulate an Americanized notion of Bourdieu's pure taste. These concepts are not identical but traditional femininity provides direct connections between morality, class, and taste that are prominent in Bourdieu's concept. I am primarily drawing on Bourdieu's work to demonstrate that so-

called pure taste can be applied to traditional femininity in an American context, where it is exhibited by the old upper-elite classes and is stereotypically defined as the binary opposite of vulgar or impure. In recent years, the American press has repopularized this type of femininity (Feasey 182; Salk). Currently, traditional femininity within this context is referred to as “WASP style,” epitomized by the tastes of the old upper elites through feminine fashions that exemplify elegance and simplicity (Salk 103). According to Salk, this style is best portrayed in the styles of old upper-elites like Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Grace Kelly (22, 32).

The examination of class in this study refers to Bourdieu’s adoption of Weber’s (1946) definition of “social class” that accounts for one’s economic position or membership based on access and control to “economic resources” and on “reputational groupings” that are reflected in one’s lifestyle, culture, and morals (Holt 213). With respect to conceptualizing the celebutante and her (social) class membership, Mills’s (1956) analysis of the upper class will be used as it distinguishes an economic and social class hierarchy among the American elite: the high or “old” and the low or “*nouveau riche*” upper-class elites (31). Such a definition is built upon specific national class distinctions that persist today and clearly articulates the American Dream myth according to Higley (17). Mills argues that America is a rigid class-based culture whose classifications (old elite versus new elite and high class versus low class) and general conceptions of American class originated from *The Social Register* (30-31, 53-55). Although it can be argued that the role the *Register* performs has declined in recent years, the publication continues to be a significant site for understanding the traditional production of American class structure and is still considered a mode of elite typology in



American sociology (Higley 10, 14; Kendall, *Good Deeds* 7). Overall, this thesis refers to class in the context of economic and social membership.

Status is commonly conceived as the social position or reputation of an individual or family in relation to other individuals or social groups. Weber associates economics and status in the conceptualization of lifestyle or “styles of life” as a means of overcoming Marxism’s highly criticized over-dependent economic concept of status (“Class” 187). Status for Weber is not limited to class; rather, it is also concerned with accumulation and thereby extends to include the concept of taste. Mills believes that status has an interrelated relationship with class, an observation that is also expressed in Bourdieu’s work. For Mills, social class typically evaluates a person’s status or “prestige” (which refers to Weber’s notion of honour whereas honour or prestige is regarded as “symbolic capital” by Bourdieu) in relation to others. He contends that status can best be judged by or reflected in one’s lifestyle, a viewpoint also shared by Bourdieu and Weber. However, it is also possible for an individual to possess an inferior status position while maintaining membership among the elite or to possess a superior status position among the non-elites. Thus status and class are separate concepts but share interrelations (e.g., a relationship to lifestyle). The concept of status as applied to celebrity studies represents a departure from Weber and will be defined using Milner (2005) based on an accumulation of public expressions (positive or negative). Milner’s concept of status is adopted to overcome the limitations of Weber’s traditional concept which preceded the celebrity system and will be discussed using Kurzman et al. (2007) in Chapter 2. Similarly, a more contemporary and comprehensive definition of lifestyle will be derived from Chaney (1996) to overcome any limitations in Weber’s and Bourdieu’s

work. Although Chaney and Bourdieu have separate views on the significance of lifestyle, Chaney's definition clearly illustrates the idea of social marking and patterns in lifestyle that will prove to be most valuable for the interpretation of Hilton's lifestyle in the content analysis.

### ***It and the It Girl: An Overview***

The It factor or It-ness is commonly used to describe a female celebrity (a film, music, or television star to a model, socialite, or celebutante) who possesses an intangible, almost god-like quality. First described in Elinor Glyn's romantic 1920s novel, *...It*, the term was defined as the "quality possessed by some few persons which draws all others with its magnetic life force" (Peretz 313). *It* functions on an implicit, shared sense of "quality" and as a result the term is very difficult to describe. According to Roach, It is an "easily perceived but hard-to-define quality possessed by abnormally interesting people" ("It" 555; *it* 1). Like many media-generated fashion buzzwords, It-ness does not bear one absolute meaning; instead it conveys an idea or sense of glamour, sexuality, privilege, and fame (Fowler 18; Peretz 312-34; Roach, *it* 2, 44b). As such, the concept of charisma is often attributed as It. Weber defines charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities . . . [and] regarded as of divine origin" ("The Sociology" 61).

Clara Bow became the first It Girl when she starred in Paramount Studios' 1927 film adaptation of Glyn's novel. Bow's performance as It, according to Camille Paglia, marked the It Girl as an icon whose "powerful sexual image" would transpire into a cult-like following that would be later echoed by Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and

Madonna (Fowler 18). The early examples of It-ness found in Bow, Monroe, and Taylor captivated audiences through the marketing of glamour. According to Gundle and Castelli, glamour is a term that “signifies ‘*charme*’ in the realm of entertainment and fashion” (2-3) and refers to “the tradition of Hollywood glamour. . . [and] Californian beauty, jet-set lifestyle, and perfect grooming” (7). Gundle and Castelli’s definition of glamour denotes the interrelated connections between It, glamour, charm or charisma, and lifestyle that were constructed by the Hollywood studio system. This definition that emphasizes charm and charisma first appeared in the French dictionary *Le Robert*, and by extension can be understood as emphasizing It as a supernatural or mystic ability. However the contemporary use of glamour was most influenced by Throp’s *America at the Movies* (1939) wherein glamour was described as being “sex appeal plus luxury plus elegance plus romance,” thus expanding the term to favour the notion of lifestyle (Gundle and Castelli 8). Throp’s definition of glamour coincides with “the development of commercial culture and the modern city,” where the acquisition of the material or commercial quality quickly became associated with glamour due to Hollywood’s construction and projection of the term and image in the 1930s (Gundle and Castelli 6). Thus Gundle and Castelli conclude that glamour is “a phenomenon of material culture” that seeks “to dazzle, to bewitch, and to seduce” the masses primarily through film and print (6).

*Vanity Fair* reports that by 1930 the media’s use of the term It-ness lost its popularity until It reappeared in the American press during the stardom of socialite Edie Sedgwick in 1965 (Peretz 313). During Sedgwick’s “career,” the It Girl became identified with style due to her influence on artists like Warhol and Bob Dylan and on

fashion designers Betsey Johnson and Diane von Furstenberg. More significantly, this period marked the beginning of the press's regular practice of using the It Girl in celebrity and fashion publications, thus associating her with lifestyle and ideal taste-making abilities. Her privileged high society background that opposed her excessive lifestyle and flamboyant dress became newsworthy and was deemed as It by American tabloids and national newspapers (Finkelstein and Dalton 60-61, 122; *The Real Edie*). Despite the popularity of the term, It-ness remained vague but its significance was profound, as Johnson explains: "She was it. I don't know what it is, but Andy always wanted to be around people who lived it, were born it, did it all, did anything they wanted to do—and that was Edie" (qtd. in Finkelstein and Dalton 59). Moreover, in the documentary entitled *The Real Edie* (2007), Sedgwick's It Girl significance is moved beyond fashion to a cultural grounding where she is described as a meaningful figure who somehow evoked an attitude that corresponded with the political tensions of gender and class in America during the 1960s. She was representative of a subculture movement where young elites from New England society intersected with New York underground culture. Americans were captivated by her transgression that appalled the old upper-classes.

Since the 1960s, the media have attributed the It Girl title to a select group of elite young women characterized according to medium: film stars in the 70s (Jane Fonda, Angelica Huston, Mia Farrow), models in the 80s (Naomi Campbell, Elizabeth Hurley, Veronica Webb), socialites in the 90s (Miller sisters, Anne McNally, Anita Rousell, Tara Palmer-Tompkinson), and celebutantes today (Hilton sisters, Casey Johnson, Nicole Richie, Lauren Bush, Amanda Hearst). The It Girl title remains highly sought-after and

selective; as Mills claims through a similar phenomenon he describes as “The All-American Girl,” these Girls are developed to “set the images of appearance and conduct which are imitated down the national hierarchy of glamour” (81). In 2000, *Vanity Fair*’s contributing editor Evgenia Peretz affirmed that the modern It Girl possesses the three qualities of “sex appeal, charisma, and resonance” (311). These qualities are represented through a *je ne sais quoi* attitude and glamorous lifestyle pictorial to capture modern It-ness in Peretz’s cover story. The release of George Hickenlooper’s bio-pic on Sedgwick *Factory Girl* (2006) was, however, credited as initiating the It Girl to “catch fire in a new era” according to *USA Today* (Memmott 4). Nevertheless, I argue in Chapter 4 that the reemergence of the It Girl stems from the popularization of the current-day celebutante in 2002.

### ***The Phenomenon of the Celebutante***

The celebutante refers to the category of celebrities who are “famous for being famous”: young (always in their twenties), fashionable, and notorious party girls who are members of “high-class” society due to family fortunes. These females fall into the realm of “celebrity-for-the-sake-of-celebrity” or “socialite/heiress-turned-celebrity” and are known as It Girls in the American popular press (Allon 71; Davis 72, 74; Oppenheimer 258, 260; “The Hilton Sisters”; “Society Girls”; “Trust Fund Babies”; “Young Hot Hollywood”). The celebutante represents a heightened characterization of Lowenthal’s “sphere of consumption and organized leisure” because her lifestyle is her celebrity (135). Given that to date no academic work has focused exclusively on the celebutante, my thesis attempts to define and conceptualize the term by applying the ideas in Mills’s *Power Elite* (1956) and Boorstin’s *The Image* (1961). Although Lowenthal’s work

pioneered the interpretation of contemporary celebrity culture through reflecting its links to capitalism, a more appropriate approach to celebutante construction is adapted in this study. By applying Boorstin's view of the celebrity, this approach attempts to overcome a limitation in Lowenthal's Marxist critique (celebrity as a system for ideological manipulation) and also presents a postmodern consideration of the celebutante. Class struggles as discussed in Mills's work are evident in the celebutante lifestyle. Neither Lowenthal nor Boorstin address this particular issue.

Mair, author of Hilton's unofficial biography, describes the celebutante phenomenon as "a new breed of wealthy women on the Los Angeles-Manhattan-South Beach circuit" (2). His description illustrates that wealth determined by family estate or lineage, notoriety or publicity, and geographical location are crucial elements for the current celebutante climate. These specified crucial elements are expressed in the terms "celeb," as characterized by notoriety and the glamorous Hollywood lifestyle, and "butantate," as being representative of debutante status or an heiress to a family fortune. Currently, there are dozens of celebutantes circulating in the American media. Hence the infamous Hilton sisters, Johnson & Johnson heiress Casey Johnson, rock-star daughters of Nicole Richie, Kimberly Stewart, Elizabeth Jagger, and Alexandra and Theodora Richards, and Hearst media heiress Amanda Hearst—young Hollywood is temporarily dominated by this trend. Contrary to public perception, the term celebutante is not new as the origins are traced through the rich social history of the American East Coast (primarily New York and Boston) elite socialites. The term celebutante was coined in print by Walter Winchell in 1939 to describe the infamous party girl and Boston

debutante Brenda Frazier, after she received celebrity-level attention from her appearance on the cover of *Life* magazine in 1938 (Smith 282).

Most popular culture critics agree that the term has reemerged with the rise of Paris Hilton (Smith 282). The emergence of the term with Hilton is representative of a new social hegemonic struggle. Based on Mills's definition of how elites define the upper class, the celebute is not a member of the "old upper-class status" (33). Instead it is argued that she, like all celebutes, personifies "*nouveau riche* or new upper-class status" as her family's wealth is "of the entrepreneurial type"—thus linked to notoriety—and was accumulated after the Civil War (31, 49). This sentiment of being *nouveau riche* or part of the non-authentic elite is visible in Hilton's first interview and pictorial in a 2000 issue of *Vanity Fair*, in which Hilton is introduced to the American public as "the very model of a hip-hop debutante" (Sales 350).

### ***Paris Hilton and Taste***

Hilton has been establishing herself as a celebrity since the age of sixteen when she first started appearing on "Page Six" of the *New York Post* and in Sunday's fashion section of the *New York Times* for her ostentatious behaviour and style (Sales 352, 378). A recent CBC documentary "Paris Inc." explains that even at this young age she "understood the seductiveness of a perfectly angled chin." Nicknamed "Star" as a young girl by her parents and an "attention junkie" by gossip columnists, Hilton is considered by many media analysts to be the product of the paparazzi, based on her determination to be famous for her lifestyle—famous for being famous—as opposed to professional work ("Paris Inc."; "Trust Fund Babies"; "Society Girls"; "The Hilton Sisters"; "The Hilton Sisters: Queens of Making Money"). This determination has resulted in a popularity that

both baffles and intrigues international audiences (“Paris Inc.”). The great-granddaughter of the notorious Hilton hotel developer, Conrad Hilton, began her Hollywood career by “crashing” industry and high society parties in New York and Beverly Hills at the age of fourteen—all with the permission and encouragement of her mother Kathy Hilton, a former child television star (Oppenheimer 26-27). Infamous among these cities’ elite circles, it was not until November 2003 that she gained mass popularity due to the release of a sex tape. Her June 2007 imprisonment for violating a suspended driving license sentence has intensified her popularity even further to global level recognition.

Her role as a celebrity is to function as a maker of cultural taste, rather than having the primary celebrity role of producing work and large profits for film or music executives and companies. Her initial fame and status are reliant on her ability to appear—to pose for photographers at all the exclusive parties and media events with the most influential Hollywood A-listers looking both chic and demurely risqué. Jeff Verspa, her family photographer and co-creative director for her publications explains that Hilton is aware of her cultural significance: “she [always] knows what she’s doing, she goes to all these fun parties, she’s beautiful, she wears the right clothes, you know those are all things this country is interested in” (“Paris Inc.”). This notion of a perceived appearance indicates and underlines Hilton’s role both as a taste-maker and as a commodity in American culture.

Hilton becomes a commodity purely through her taste-making abilities: by the clothes and accessories she wears, by the hairstylists or make-up lines she verbally endorses, by the places she chooses to dine and vacation at, and so forth. It was the influence and power of Hilton’s last name and her It Girl status (her ability to serve as a



taste-maker) that enabled her to become an actress at the age of twenty-one with the *The Simple Life* in 2003. She thus began to develop herself as a traditional celebrity—as well as a model for other celebutantes and a trend in popular culture—through movie and television roles, a music career, publishing, handbags, designer fragrance deals, and other endorsements. In an interview with the CBC, *Celebrity/Culture* author Ellis Cashmore supports this notion by explaining how her status (and consequently taste) has become central to the meaning of celebrity culture and consumerism. He remarks,

Her presence is alone enough to fascinate us and that is a marketing miracle . . . .

It's impossible not to know who Paris Hilton is . . . whether you love her, loathe her, detest [or] hate her . . . you cannot possibly escape her. She is a diagnosis of celebrity culture today; someone who kinda embodies everything of the adulation, marketing, and commodification . . . of contemporary culture. ("Paris Inc.")

At the age of twenty-seven, Hilton has an estimated net worth of US \$250 million dollars and over 27,000 different photographs of her have appeared in the American press since 2004 ("Paris Inc."). It was reported that the Hilton sisters received the largest nightclub promotional contract of all celebrities when they received a sum of US \$500,000 to appear at Las Vegas's LAX nightclub in December 2007 (Blakeley, par. 2). Thus her ability to appear and make taste is advancing the relevance of the celebrity so that the marketing of an It Girl is sufficient enough to prompt a consumer movement, but more profoundly a shift in culture.

Because *Distinction* is primarily concerned with the articulation of cultural tastes and the way "which those tastes arise out of, and are mobilised in, struggles for social recognition or status," as observed by Jenkins (129), this struggle will be revealed in the

interpretative and content analyses of Hilton's lifestyle. From a Marxist-cultural perspective, the aspect of Hilton's celebrity which makes her a dichotomy are the attempts made to construct Hilton as a member of high class when, according to Bourdieu's and Mills's definition of upper-class elites, she is denied true elite membership. Even more compelling is that her behaviour and lifestyle reflect both good and bad taste or high and low class, offering upward and downward class mobility, further revealing a hegemonic struggle. It is the combination of the media's interpretation of these identified transgressions as well as her continued popularity and commercial success as a good taste-maker that are central to this study. Using Bourdieu, this thesis approaches Hilton as a "symbolic restructuring" of the dominant classes' position whereby the "new *bourgeoisie*," commonly referred to as the *nouveau riche*, attempts to succeed the dominant or "old" elites (*Distinction* 310-11). He argues that distinctions between high and low taste are appropriated by members of each class to "function as signs of distinction or marks . . . expressing class membership whose intersection defines social identity" (*Distinction* 482). The study of a celebutante as representative of class-based tastes permits a lucid examination of lifestyle in order to more fully conceptualize It.

### ***Chapter Summaries***

This thesis utilizes a two-step approach of interpretative and content analyses loosely based on a culturalist perspective. The significance of It is examined through the lifestyle of the celebutante who represents the most current It Girl (Hilton). The assessment of the American media's portrayal of the It Girl's lifestyle, as a traditional relationship between taste and class, follows Bourdieu's perspective. Bourdieu's work

serves to provide the theoretical framework of my thesis: his classifications of taste are applied to the definition of the It Girl's taste and his notions of capital will represent the major elements that define It-ness. Despite her transgressions, it will be concluded that she retains an image of good taste in order to preserve the status quo.

The literature review in Chapter 2 presents an overview of the theoretical work on taste and celebrity in order to position the celebutante-as-It-Girl, first as a highly relevant, yet underdeveloped phenomenon, and second as a lifestyle taste-maker. An account of the current literature on celebrity and the It Girl points to its existing vagueness in academia and demonstrates the relevance and originality of this thesis. Lastly, this review will further justify the appropriateness of Bourdieu by contextualizing the relationship between celebrity and taste. The methodological review for this study is presented in Chapter 3, which provides a rationalization for the combined research approach and for the selection of Hilton. It also outlines the methodological design of the content analysis that involves visual and textual analyses from a selection of American celebrity weeklies and fashion magazines. Finally, the chapter accounts for the categorization of Bourdieu's capitals and notions of taste into variables that are measured in the content analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the interpretative analysis of the media's framing of the celebutante-as-It-Girl with the support of the textual and visual content analyses' results. Within Chapter 4, Boorstin and Mills are adapted for my purpose to form an original working definition and conceptualization of the celebutante as no such definition has been posited. Proceeding from this definition, Chapter 4 will focus on conceptualizing Bourdieu's capitals as It. The content analysis's results on lifestyle and taste are linked to

Bourdieu's work for the purposes of supporting my interpretation: It-ness as a highly desired, ideal embodiment of Bourdieu's capitals that is produced by the American media. The formal analysis of Hilton's taste is presented in Chapter 5 which will illuminate and examine Hilton's conflicting modes of taste. The content analysis's findings coupled with the interpretative analysis support my claim that both good and bad taste contribute or enhance one's It-ness and reveal how the media framing of the It Girl legitimates social mobility through consumption. The results of these analyses are interpreted and supported by Bourdieu's, Foster's, and Kendall's work as well as being contrasted to Hilton's own publication, *Confessions*. Lastly, Chapter 6 serves as the conclusion of this thesis. This chapter discusses the study's limitations and provides recommendations for future studies on the It Girl and celebutante. Through studying the celebutante's relation to the It Girl phenomenon, my thesis strives to come closer to conceptualizing the It Girl by exposing the class mobility myth offered in American consumerism.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Overview of Celebrity Studies*

Although the impact and influence of the Hollywood-produced star system are undeniable, their magnitude is difficult for scholars to measure. Research in the disciplines of media studies, sociology, humanities, and psychology repeatedly indicates that North America's obsession with entertainment has resulted in a society that idolizes the celebrity, which is referred to as a "modern phenomenon" of the culture or cult of celebrity (Cashmore 2-3, 6-8; Dyer 9-11; Rojek 16). Lowenthal writes that the modern heroes in society have become celebrities or what he describes as "idols of consumption" whose professional "organized leisure" work and private lives are to be equally revered and consumed (130, 135). The concept of fame is not new—it has been historically accounted for since the Roman Empire—but the extent of the role that fame and celebrity play in contemporary North American society has intensified. The criteria for what constitutes celebrity have expanded and the celebrity has become increasingly more integrated into everyday life (Cashmore 1-3; Gamson, *Claims* 5-6; Harmon 6; Marshall x-xi; Rojek 10-15). In the past decade, significant cultural changes such as the convergence of media industries, the proliferation of new technology, and the rise of infotainment have drastically increased the relevance of celebrity in daily life, enabling the celebrity to evolve into new authoritative roles.

As a result of the media's constant representation of a celebrity's social and economic status, the celebrity lifestyle is projected to the masses as one to be celebrated and emulated, confirming that the celebrity has attained a position of "cultural authority", expert status (Harmon 6), or one that upholds Lowenthal's notion of idolization. This cultural authority is materialized within the realm of lifestyle as celebrities can influence

social practices, attitudes, opinions, and consumer behaviour. It would be logical to assume that research would be performed to explore the phenomenon of celebrity and the subsequent cultural authority roles (e.g., taste-makers) the celebrity has attained within everyday life. Yet research is limited. Studies of the impact of celebrity status and the forms of cultural authority that celebrities possess in everyday life are vague and limited (Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea 588-89; Dyer 7-8; Harmon 100; Marshall i-xii, 16).

Research has not addressed the ways in which celebrities and their social status influence cultural practices and spaces of the everyday. Most media scholars attribute celebrity to a “status” system that enables celebrities’ economic success, but cannot reach a consensus on if or how this social position affects culture and ideology (Kurzman et al. 347; Milner 66). Thus, research has failed to account for the factors that have permitted celebrities to become figures of cultural authority and to obtain roles beyond their professional work in the domain of everyday life. This underscores the relevance of studying the celebrity as a taste-maker as an attempt to gain insight on celebrity status and cultural authority.

Perhaps celebrity culture has not been adequately examined because the two main perspectives, cultural decline and populist democracy, have opposing approaches to the value and role of modern celebrity culture. According to Evans, the populist view perceives the expansion of celebrity as a positive means that supports the Western ideology of personal and economic freedom (14). The result has created a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture where the definition of celebrity or the criteria for a star include forms of self-expression from infamous to hyper-democratization. Adapting Lasch’s perspective, DIY celebrity culture can also be considered an extension of the “self invasion” (10-11) or “journey of myself” from the 1970s sexual revolution (15). New technologies increase

audience access to celebrity culture as well as the accessibility to become a celebrity due to new platforms for self-promotion. Supporters of this perspective include Braudy (1986), Rojek (2001), and Turner (*Celebrity* 2004). The entertainment system, it is argued, rewards individual uniqueness and collective expressions rather than standardization and elite access (Evans 15). In this culture, celebrity exists outside of talent or professional work, and Rojek explains that fame and celebrity are simply acts that “impact on public consciousness” and celebrate the “previously unrecognized or repressed” (10, 210).

The cultural decline perspective of celebrity is similar to Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry theory (1973). In this view of celebrity, the media are responsible for the manufacturing and promotion of the celebrity. Much like Horkheimer and Adorno’s claim that the mass media signify a decline in American culture, supporters of the cultural decline perspective argue that the celebrity is representative of a cultural decline in the erosion of the noble and charismatic aspect of fame. Scholars such as Boorstin (1961), Gitlin (1998), Marshall (1997), and Schickel (1985) maintain that the scope of celebrity has reduced fame to an endless act of self-promotion organized by the industry for economic gains. Marshall writes that by “studying examples from prior [celebrity] usage, one can see the transformation of its sense from affinity with piety and religion to some modern sense of false value” (4). Previously reserved for the so-called god-given talents or honourable deeds and acts, celebrity becomes shallow. Fame becomes distorted and is separate from any allocation of professional achievement, skill, and charismatic quality. A celebrity is recognized only for his or her well-knownness and fame develops a fixed association with self-worth and not necessarily talent.

This study's understanding of the celebrity is informed by both perspectives. The decision is motivated by my interpretation of the celebutante-as-It-Girl who I believe represents a fusion of these two views. It is the populists' expanded notion of a celebrity that permits a celebutante to be considered a celebrity—famous for being famous. Her success is the product of sheer self-promotion and her ability to prove herself marketable to the industry. The celebutante's promotion and marketability are the result of her privileged position and access to elite groups, which will be analyzed in Chapter 4 through the work of Boorstin's and Mills's, who support the cultural decline perspective. The following sections in this literature review seek to provide the necessary theoretical framework on celebrity culture in order to account for and defend the celebutante-as-It-Girl's position as a cultural authority; that of a lifestyle taste-maker for consumer society. By approaching her in this manner, this review outlines the relevance and originality of my thesis's topic and approach and provides a context for the theorization of the celebutante—all while attempting to contribute to the understanding of the celebrity in everyday life. The contemporary It Girl culture, with its themes of taste and lifestyle, are best illuminated using Bourdieu's work. An account of his critique on taste and its appropriateness for this thesis concludes this chapter.

### ***Defining Celebrity***

Contemporary celebrities are simply described as “well-known” public figures whose fame arises from entertainment or sporting industries and generates more public interest in their private lives than in their professional lives (Boorstin 58; Cashmore 1-2; Gamson, *Claims* 58; Turner, *Celebrity* 4-5). Evans notes that the modern celebrity is “largely built upon the decline of inherited status positions and the rise of a more socially



mobile society” (52). Similarly, Kurzman et al. contend that celebrities as a status group challenge Weber’s traditional definition of status groups where status is limited to family hierarchies and notions of honour that diminished with the rise of capitalism (362-63). Ironically though, the celebutante is constructed from these inherited status positions, which is representative of the ideological struggle introduced in Chapter 1. However, like any other celebrity, the celebutante’s celebrity status is ephemeral. Regardless of the celebutante’s initial position of privilege, celebrity status is subject to dissipation because Hollywood fame is dependent on the ability to maintain public popularity and to successfully function as a commodity. Popularity and commercialism are crucial to support the position of celebrity status—even if one’s fame is inherited. Celebrity today is defined equally as an expression of an individual’s fame (the by-product of professional work) or as the result of inherited privilege or notoriety that may not denote a position of “honour” in Weber’s point of view.

The celebrity is both an economic (stressing a production value) and cultural (stressing a consumption value) product of the Hollywood film studios that were first developed in the late- 1920s (Dyer 10-11, 35-36; Evans 51; Gamson, *Claims* 27, 29-31; Marshall 7, 84-85). The celebrity as a manufactured economic or “Hollywood” product is constructed within tightly linked sub-industries, such as public relations and advertising that are regulated by film, television, and music studios (Dyer 11; Gamson, *Claims* 65; Marshall 84-86; Turner, *Celebrity* 35-37). The celebrity functions as a commodity in two ways. The celebrity as a worker serves to sell his or her performance or professional work (film, television show, music, product endorsement) for a managing studio/company, whereas as the celebrity will sell ‘personality’ in order to attract an

audience and sell commercial products (Cashmore 2-3; Gamson, *Claims* 62-65; Gitlin 81; Rojek 14; Turner, *Celebrity* 34-36). These distinctions have been blurred to exploit the celebrity's economic potential which is continuously heightened in current celebrity culture (Dyer 10-11; Gamson, *Claims* 62-65; Gitlin 81; Rojek 14; Turner, *Celebrity* 34-36). Traditional categories of the celebrity, as film stars or television personalities or of on the basis of medium or genre, that were used by film scholars such as deCordova (1986), Dyer (1979), and Langer (1981) are outdated due to the cultural expansion of the scope of fame and the corresponding media platforms (Bonner 73).

The celebrity serves as a site for the empowerment, construction, and communication of cultural and social meanings in contemporary culture. Dyer was among the first scholars to recognize that the celebrity was manufactured according to the tastes of the audience and embodied codes and signs for the purpose of public consumption (9-10). In other words, the celebrity was a commodity that also functioned as an important cultural and social product. Marshall explains that the celebrity's "value" or cultural significance is his or her ability to "embody the empowerment of the people to shape the public sphere symbolically" (7). He maintains that celebrity's meaningfulness lies within its ability to offer social insight and sense-making through its capacity to signify "social difference and distinction" and universal "personality types" (65).

Although it may appear that the celebrity is strictly constructed by media industries, both Dyer and Marshall argue that a celebrity is "configured" through the negotiation of the media, the public, and the actual celebrity. It is ultimately the audience, according to Marshall, who constructs the meaning by accepting, rejecting, or modifying the dominant image projected by the industry that initially creates a celebrity

with a specific persona. Through this “collective configuration” between the industry and the audience, Marshall claims that the celebrity becomes “an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a culture” (65). The capability to generate and communicate cultural and social meanings suggests that the celebrity is representative of Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemonic struggle.

***Cultural Significance of the Celebrity: Lifestyle Taste-Maker***

Turner, Bonner, and Marshall assert that “the gap between the celebrity and the ordinary person is closed through buying commodities” (149). This viewpoint is shared by most celebrity scholars. By inhabiting a privileged social space, the celebrity and his or her associated codes and signs become enviable through media promotion and emphasize the celebrity’s value to society as a cultural commodity. This is representative of the cultural authority that celebrities exert as their lifestyle and taste become the highly desirable and idealized lifestyle and status for the masses. Rojek claims that celebrities are distinctive commodities within the marketplace; their uniqueness lies in their ability to “humanize the process of commodity consumption” (14). By giving a human face to a given product, the celebrity provides the consumer with an opportunity to become associated with his or her lifestyle (and status), and this reveals the celebrity’s taste-making abilities.

It is the structure of the capitalist system—and not only the media industry—that is responsible for creating specific individuals (celebrities) as objects of consumption and for encouraging the masses to desire these objects (Cashmore 15; Lowenthal 130; Rojek 14). Particularly, the blurred distinction between the roles of the worker and of the celebrity has advanced the appeal and marketability of celebrity consumption (Cashmore

2-3; Gamson, *Claims* 62-65; Turner, *Celebrity* 34-36). According to both Gamson and Rojek, consumers desire celebrities in the same way they desire to possess other commodities. Cashmore expands this notion by arguing that society's emphasis on excess and impulse has created an addiction to celebrity culture since the new millennium when consumers have come to "crave" celebrities and their lifestyles (15).

Given the It Girl's relationship with style, the commodity most connected to her and to this thesis is fashion. Fashion has been recognized by film scholars since the mid-1970s as signs, symbols, or a system of codes (Dyer 35-39). Dyer argues that fashion and other forms of dress such as hair, make-up, and accessories reflect social class (and taste) as well as a star's personality (110). He states that both fashion and leisure "are useful in the analysis of the image of stardom" and preserve "a distinctive class" where celebrities and their material goods become the "model of consumption" for the masses within a consumer society (Dyer 39). More current works by Cashmore and by Lim argue that, as a result of status, celebrities have become successful brands. Within this context, the celebrities themselves have become the commodity and they are able to create consumer trends and popularity—and hence produce taste simply through the act of appearing and being photographed (Cashmore 3, 13-15; Lim 84).

Lim writes that "in the often image-conscious world of fashion, there exists the ultimate embodiment of celebrity branding—because clothes adorn and drape the human body, what is being sold is the very sense of a person's actual being. The way a celebrity will pout insouciantly or nonchalantly makes a statement that inevitably sells products" (84). The illusion of upward social mobility is delivered to the public via an image that transforms the celebrity's body into capital and motivates consumers. An individual's

motivation to buy, according to Lim, is due to a combination of envy and a desire to emulate this glamorous lifestyle or social status (87). The success of a celebrity brand or this commodification of his or her body is maintained by the development of an image or persona that captures and promotes a glamorous, celebrity lifestyle. Lim concludes that this is a new trend within consumerism and defines it as both a “brand extension” and “lifestyle extension” of the celebrity (85, 107) that reinforces the significance of a celebrity’s taste-making abilities.

*W* magazine reports that the celebutante has become the preferred model, over film stars and fashion models, for national advertising campaigns and runway show in 2005 and 2006 (Lau 42-43, 46) and this trend is continuing. Such examples include: Amanda Hearst appearing in the fall 2006 and spring 2007 ad campaigns for Lilly Pulitzer; Hilton appearing in all 2005 and 2006 GUESS and Marciano campaigns and in all 2005-2007 Los Angeles Fashion Week runway shows for 2BFree and Heatherette; Nicole Richie appearing in the spring 2006 ad campaigns for Jimmy Choo; and Elizabeth Jagger and the Richards sisters appearing in the fall 2005 ad campaign for Tommy Hilfiger and on New York runways for Tuleh and Matthew Williamson. This trend has also expanded to the marketing of American fashion magazines, dating back to when (Lauren) Bush and Jagger were listed (not photographed) on the cover of *Vogue* in August 2001. Examples include: Hilton for the cover of *Jane* (which has since folded) in February 2005; Richie for the cover of *Jane* in November 2005; Richie for *Nylon* in June 2007; Hilton and Richie for the cover of *Harper’s Bazaar* in June 2007 and more recently Richie on *Harper’s Bazaar* in June 2008. The high profile in fashion produces strong evidence to support the argument for celebutante as a lifestyle taste-maker. Drawing on

Lim's statements, it can be reasoned that the popularity is a result of the interest in her lifestyle.

"Possession" of a celebrity and celebrity status is only available through one or more consumer lifestyle activities. Most of celebrity consumption is symbolic in nature: the industry uses tools—print, television, film—to appeal to the tastes and desires of an audience (Dugdale 1). The celebrity is represented and marketed in the media by using methods of relativism (e.g. photographing celebrities doing "normal" activities, wearing little make-up or carrying an accessory that is attainable by the middle-class) that appeal to audience tastes, while also incorporating tactics that appeal to the desires of the audience and make the audience seem "privy" to the personal lives of celebrities (Cashmore 1-5; Dugdale 1; Gamson *Claims* 29-31). In other words, the industry uses branding strategies and the media to produce an illusionary or a symbolic relationship between an individual and the celebrity. It is these illusionary links that enable the individual to experience class-passing. To summarize, it is the combination of the industry's humanizing of the celebrity-as-a-commodity and the emulation and symbolic possession by the masses that enables celebrities and their status to be successfully marketed as lifestyle taste-makers.

Cashmore's and Lim's argument suggests that the masses have come to desire the luxurious and glamorous celebrity lifestyle. In fact, Michman and Mazze's work supports this claim as they have identified a consumer movement in America during the late 1990s and early 2000s toward the masses' wide embrace of luxury or "affluent" lifestyles (2-4, 137-142). A luxurious lifestyle now includes services and experiences in travel, food, fitness, and leisure activities and is not limited to consumer goods as in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consumer behaviour has changed most visibly in the middle-class; Michman and Mazze state that “it is now possible for middle-class families to have the kind of life only the rich could afford 20 years ago” as many families “have migrated toward . . . buying luxury products” regardless of their expense (11). The new importance of luxury permits a refinement of consumer lifestyles whereby displays of status are heightened (137, 145), and the celebrity’s lifestyle commonly becomes illustrated in the stories and advertisements in the media as an ideal luxurious lifestyle (Cashmore 13-15; Gamson, *Claims* 97-98).

Cashmore alleges that the interest in a celebrity’s lifestyle and consumption patterns was achieved by the industry’s careful “cultivation” of audiences’ tastes, which has gradually occurred since the 1960s (2). However, Gamson has more accurately dated this to the late 1940s and early 1950s with the decline of the Studio system, the advances in sound technology, as well as the rise in celebrity and human interest reporting in popular magazines (*Claims* 40-41). From an industrial perspective, promoting a myth of ordinariness, the celebrity-as-ordinary strategy, creates a false sense of connection and intimacy between the celebrity and audience and thus tightens the economic links between a celebrity and the audience (Dyer 12-13, 43; Evans 36; Gamson, *Claims* 29-30; Marshall 85). In magazines, such illusions of ordinariness are achieved through “candid” photos of stars in their homes or at their favourite places (e.g., shops, restaurants) and personal stories about their love interests, their desire to be like any normal person—meaning the reader—and the difficulties of their job, fame, and having a family life. These “relatable” images, though, are juxtaposed against the overall glamour and elitism

of their lifestyle and the marginal reality of attaining celebrity status, thus demonstrating the contradictory character of modern celebrity culture.

Marshall acknowledges that the media's role in assisting the individual's desire for celebrity possession is reflective of Althusser's (1971) theory of "interpellation"—otherwise known as "hailing" (64). He states that the selling of the modern celebrity is based on advertising's conventional emotional appeals (59-60). Most prominently, celebrity appeal, as reflected in the celebrity-as-ordinary marketing, is based on the "affective" realm (55). Affection is defined by Marshall as the passionate or "irrational elements of human action" (55). Affective power is the emotional attachment that the audience has toward a celebrity and is the "measurement" used by the industry to legitimate the role and value of a celebrity within society (183). Marshall explains that affective power establishes the economic or commercial success of a celebrity as it capitalizes on attention-grabbing capabilities or notoriety (56). The higher or more emotionally intense the level of audience attachment, the more economically or commercially successful a celebrity will be, and the easier it becomes to promote the American Dream and class mobility via consumption according to this reasoning.

It is precisely this focus on the personal and "private" that enables celebrity reporting to dominate tabloids and emphasizes the cultural significance of the celebrity's taste-making role. By 1937, forty-nine tabloids were published each week with a collective circulation of more than 3.5 million copies in the United States, clearly establishing a dedicated readership (Bird 23). The slogan for tabloid marketing became "90 percent entertainment, 10 percent information—and the information without boring you" during the 1930s (Sloan 25). With the majority of the content dedicated to



entertainment, lifestyle became a popular technique to sell both the work and the status of a celebrity. By the 1940s, this technique was firmly developed within American journalism (Ponce de Leon 73). The modern-day tabloids *The Globe* and *The National Enquirer* were established in the 1950s, followed by the less sensational celebrity-reporting weekly publications like *People* in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the tabloid reached its peak with an estimated readership of 50 million (Bird 33).

Although the interest in tabloid magazines peaked, audience interest in celebrity lifestyle still flourishes. These publications continue to use both the celebrities' professional work and their private lives to produce "relatable" lifestyle images by capturing and subsequently marketing: where they shop, dine, and vacation; what leisure activities they enjoy; and what products and brands they favour. In current celebrity culture, the tabloid has been replaced by the celebrity weekly. My reference to celebrity weeklies points to *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *Okay!*, *People*, *Star*, and *US Weekly*. I believe that weeklies differ from tabloids or gossip magazines because they are specifically celebrity-oriented and cover every aspect of celebrity lifestyle in the format of a weekly log. Scandal and gossip becomes secondary to lifestyle and consumption in these publications which can be considered a result of the new importance of affluent lifestyles as indicated by Michman and Mazze's research.

The techniques and strategies that the industry uses to appeal to the masses have significantly changed since the era of the Hollywood studios in order to increase profits. The climate of celebrity today, like the American Dream, is highly contradictory: it is unattainable yet at the same time appears to be down-to-earth. This contradiction of "humanizing" the enviable continuously attracts an audience, as Gamson argues, and

enables the celebrity to function as a lifestyle taste-maker. Hilton-as-the-It Girl will demonstrate this contradiction through her social mobility. The industry's goal is to use aesthetics as personality and status as best reflected in the celebrity's glamorous lifestyle, to intrigue the audience to buy both the work and the commoditized image of the celebrity. Regardless of the inauthentic quality of celebrity, the public remains fascinated by celebrity culture and continues to find pleasure and meaning in its representations.

### ***Academia, Celebutantes, and the It Girl***

Despite the popularity of the terms and their frequent use in the media, the It Girl and celebutante remain largely undefined and underdeveloped. Academic research related to the It Girl and celebutante is sparse; to date, Roach presents a rare examination of the It factor, whereas no scholarly publication has been written specifically on the celebutante. Therefore, much of the analysis presented in this study is innovative. Most literature on the celebutante, the It factor, and the It Girl exists outside of academia in popular books and magazines. These materials report on who has It or who is a celebutante but fail to conceptualize the term or fully explore its cultural significance. Even the most recent works on celebrity culture have failed to identify the celebutante phenomenon, but they have at least acknowledged a new type of "lifestyle" celebrities: those who generate more interest in their consumption patterns than in their professional work (Barron 540; Cashmore 14-15). This discussion though is confined to analyzing career diversification. A working definition of, and theoretical context for, the celebutante need to be constructed in order to expose her underlying, hegemonic significance: personification of celebrity pseudo-ism and traditional American class boundaries. Thus such a definition would bridge this research gap—it would transform

her from a popular cliché and rightly establish her as a complex and profound cultural concept. While historically insightful, Roach's newest work on It is justly confined to an examination of the theatrical realm that theorizes the It-Effect in acting. It-ness in this work acknowledges the significance of aesthetics but examines these through traditional notions of charisma, talent, and the Hollywood studio system (Roach, "It" 555-57).

Overall, current work on It neglects the consumerism that the It factor has materialized within recent years in fashion and lifestyle magazines. Roach, however, does identify the crucial component of It-ness—status—as a fundamental characteristic of the It Girl that has not been validated by the press.

He notes that It is a "precondition of celebrity" ("It" 556). I have interpreted Roach's observation as the following: if one possesses the It factor, one has the ability to reach superior celebrity status. Although all celebrities must possess It in varying degrees, the It Girl status is an ideal form (or the highest level) of It as the media only attribute the label to a few select female celebrities. To have the It factor, is to be an It Girl or to have highly sought after status according to this rationale. Moreover, because Bourdieu argues that to examine status is to examine lifestyle, It as currently reported in the press does not accurately reflect an It Girl's status because the press distorts, what I term, her poor-taste-lifestyle. Hence the It Girl's ability to be socially mobile can be viewed as an attempt to discount the reality of her lifestyle (moments of bad taste) in order to maintain the It Girl status of elite class and good taste.

The It Girl's lifestyle is marked by excess that is attained from her class membership (access to economic and social resources) and status group (celebrity) and is undermined by popular and academic texts. An examination of Hilton's lifestyle

illuminates a contemporary version of the poor-taste-lifestyle and will portray bad taste as enhancing It. Her taste-making abilities were depicted by American *Vogue* in February 2000 as on par with the Bush dynasty's debutante Lauren Bush (niece of President George W. Bush). However, the notion of Hilton as an It Girl was introduced to the masses in *Vanity Fair*'s September 2000 issue which represented her style and lifestyle as excessive. After the release of her sex tape, Hilton's status suffered and she became a tabloid fixture who exhibited bad taste or a poor-taste-lifestyle. Within ten months of this scandal, Hilton released *Confessions* in September 2004. It is reported that the book was a direct attempt to restore her "good" taste and "elite" reputation caused by the negativity of the tape (Oppenheimer 5). Hilton's reputation and status were once again challenged when she served a prison sentence in June 2007. She used this as an opportunity to successfully launch her clothing line, Paris Hilton, when she appeared wearing a pair of jeans from her line during her release from prison. These conflicting modes of taste provide an entry point for a discussion of the It Girl and her transgression.

### ***Theorizing Contemporary It-ness: Relationship to Taste***

Contemporary It-ness is a media construction that is representative of an ideal or a most desired attainment of taste and that exercises the highest rating or judgment of taste in the American consumer hierarchy. Although most fashion magazines limit It to dress, such as *Vogue*'s monthly "It Girl" column featuring the month's best-dressed female celebrity or socialite according to the magazine's editorial board, or *In Style*'s selection of the month's best designer as determined by celebrity appearances, celebrity publications have broadened the term. It-ness now encompasses a range of other material goods such as beauty products, accessories, electronics, music, novels, cars, and food, and also

includes nightclubs, restaurants, vacation destinations, spas, sports, and other leisure activities. Since the mid-1980s, these publications have expanded the notion of It as a measurement of one's taste in style, but also as an indication of one's taste in lifestyle to express a status group relation.

In *US Weekly*'s column entitled "The *US Buzzzzz-O-Meter*," It-ness becomes synonymous with "buzz" as the column serves to inform its readers about "the people, places, and things that are keeping *Us* abuzz" (Quinn 85). Here It is marketed as the ideal lifestyle that reveals a status relation which *US Weekly* readers are privy to through their purchase of the magazine. Secondly, by purchasing the commodity or partaking in the specified social space that the list endorses, the individual symbolically becomes a member of this status group and marks a specific social position (Kurzman et al. 357) connoting a privileged, ideal, and savvy lifestyle. Similarly, *Star* magazine publishes the weekly "Hot Sheet" where It-ness again expresses an ideal form of taste through its ability to become interchangeable with the notion of "hot-ness." Upon presenting readers with an exclusive account of the most popular commodities or lifestyle activities that Hollywood celebrities and socialites are aggressively seeking (Everett 26), It-ness is once again marketed as the preferable form of taste and as a lifestyle maker.

This new notion of It suggests a heightened encouragement of Marxism's commodity fetishism as commodities signify social positions or lifestyle (Marx 43-48). Despite the limitations of Marxism, the concepts of exchange value and use value are useful for theorizing the role It plays in consumerism. Capitalism emphasizes exchange value over use value: a commodity's value or usefulness is reliant on its exchange value—an abstract sense of worth that is built on a hierarchy of taste to project social

status rather than on the commodity's concrete or utility basis (Adorno 34-35; Marx 15-18). The commodity's value is dependent on its performance as a status symbol that draws from distinctions in taste to reflect social position or identity. Distorting a commodity's utility to reflect a culturally constructed social position, identity, or status points to the American Dream myth that the It Girl encourages: an illusion of class mobility through consumption in order to maintain the status quo. From this concept, it may be concluded that It-ness is constructed by the press to represent a highly esteemed form of exchange value that is used to enhance the products or images it is associated with. Working as a mode of stratification, it seeks to convey a media-produced notion in a form or measure that articulates a status group relation and the American Dream myth within the consumerism.

### ***Taste and Lifestyle as Conceptualized by Bourdieu***

The central importance of good taste and its relationship to social positioning suggest the relevance of Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979). His traditional links between class and taste in consumption are identified in the press's representation of the It Girl. Bourdieu's approach to taste is regarded as the homology argument. Within contemporary discourse, his approach has been challenged by Peterson's omnivore-univore argument and the individualization argument (Alderson, Junisbai, and Heacock 193). These discussions endeavor to address the limitations of Bourdieu's work (as outlined in the introduction) whilst he continues to influence current studies (e.g., Bennett, Emmison, and Frow; Sallaz and Zavisca). More significantly, in spite of challenges made to discredit his work, current research has also confirmed its homology thesis (e.g., Holbrock, Weiss, and Habich; Tomlinson). The strength and uniqueness of

Bourdieu's work for this study lie in its ability to link class to taste because it enables a discussion of social mobility. As such, it proves most useful in my conceptualization of It and the celebutante-as-It-Girl phenomenon.

According to Bourdieu, taste is linked to every act of consumption and can be used for the expression of identity. As such, it becomes an imperative cultural concept in understanding everyday life. Featherstone, whose work is representative of the individualization thesis, contends that commodities become representative of "cultural dimensions" through their ability to signify personal and social class identity (84). The significance of taste and its inherent role in consumption are articulated in the following excerpt by Paterson that emphasizes taste's link to cultural identity in everyday life:

The ability to choose from a range of products is predicated on the *distinction* between products, and what is unique within a product must be made to stand out. By choosing certain products over others we are exercising our judgement of *taste*, through which we articulate our sense of class, background, and cultural identity. Hence the connection between taste, identity, and everyday acts of consumption. (37)

Every act of consumption is thus an articulation not only of taste but also of positions of social class and cultural identity. By acknowledging taste as a demonstration of class and cultural identity, Bourdieu suggests that it indicates the existence of a social hierarchy.

This study considers how the media as a social agent construct the meaning, value, and hence distinctions of the lifestyle of the It Girl as presented in the American press. Using Bourdieu's theory, taste will be examined as a critical factor or marker in communicating one's social class position. His position is viewed as a "merging" of

Marx's and Veblen's concept of social class as argued by Paterson: "From Marx he [Bourdieu] draws on the structural distinctions between classes, but from Veblen he draws on the desire to display distinction" (43). Bourdieu's thesis is summarized in the following statement: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (*Distinction* 6). In other words, he argues that there is a link between taste and class wherein one's social/economic class reinforces taste and vice versa. He proposes that a three-brow model (highbrow or legitimate taste represents the *bourgeoisie*; middlebrow taste represents the *petit bourgeoisie*; lowbrow or popular taste represents the working-class) demonstrates the existence of class-related tastes as well as the struggles of taste domination within and between classes (*Distinction* 16).

For Bourdieu, taste is not inherent, but rather is learned: "One can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of knowledge (*savoir*)" (*Distinction* 2). He believes taste is in large part dependent on "cultural competence" which is primarily the result of "upbringing and education" (*Distinction* 1-2). Paterson expands on this by stating that "the choice of products and the desire for certain goods" or "social distinction does not derive from social class directly, but is the result of socialization into a way of life, the 'habitus'" (44). The habitus is the process of socialization that is learned by individuals from their family upbringing, academic education, and other institutions (political, religious) that all affect conceptions and preferences of taste as well as bodily and everyday practices. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher describe the concept simply as "the values and dispositions gained from our cultural history" (36). Therefore, Bourdieu's habitus consists of values and assumptions that are the result of social and cultural



socialization typically connected to class background and that influence preferences in taste.

Bourdieu asserts that class distinctions are built upon the differences of economic, cultural, and social capitals. The evaluation of one's social status and subsequently taste values is dependent on an individual's amount of personal capital (economic, cultural, or social):

The major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers—economic capital, cultural capital, and also social capital. The distribution of the different classes (and class fractions) thus runs from those who are best provided with economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in both respects.

(Bourdieu, *Distinction* 114)

Drawing from his earlier work “The Forms of Capital” (1983), Bourdieu states that capitals are “accumulated labour . . . [which] enables them [individuals] to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (96). More specifically, he claims that economic capital is expressed through an individual's profession and wealth or economic legacy: a class membership which “may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (“Forms” 98). Social capital refers to one's social relations and accounts for the access and connections to social groups, caliber of friends, and networks or resources that help to maintain economic membership. Cultural capital is loosely defined by Bourdieu and as a result, Reay's definition will be used as it concisely describes the term. She identifies this capital as forms of values or “modes of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and qualities of style” that denote cultural competency or

knowledge and thus impact the habitus (58). Although Bourdieu does not provide a specific explanation of how the habitus can be informed or influenced by cultural capital, it stands to reason that the forms or styles in which one is socialized are linked to the manners and values; that is, they are related to one's background and are associated with family, church, state, and education.

Bourdieu believes that taste is learned, judged, and distinguished according to cultural capital. Education is not limited to the practices and teachings learned at a state institution. He recognizes that experiences and individual motives can also be a form of cultural and social education that may occur at various times within an individual's life. According to Bourdieu, there are three distinct forms of cultural capital. He identifies the "embodied state" as "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body," the "objectified state" as being "in the form of cultural goods," and the "institutionalized state" which includes types of recognized "academic qualifications" ("Forms" 98-102). Knowledge and competency are achieved through symbolic skills and attributes (e.g., academic degree, status) in the three forms of cultural capital that become cultural authorities and legitimize taste (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 7). This important point requires further explanation and this will be provided in the next section in the discussion of legitimization. By examining the media's representation of the It Girl, this thesis is interested in investigating the significance of Hilton, who as a media-produced economic and cultural product, becomes representative of an objectified form of cultural capital.

His interpretation of lifestyle is a defining factor for attaining It Girl status because of its connections between status, taste, and social class. According to Bourdieu, lifestyle becomes a context that expresses these class-related differences. He suggests

that lifestyle, like taste, is a form of social distinction as material goods and commercialized forms of style (representatives of objectified cultural capital) have the ability to denote status and thus possess taste-making abilities. In fact, he believes that lifestyle becomes a product of habitus due to the learning process of perception which encourages cultural and social distinctions based on class differences. Turner's analysis of Bourdieu explains the relationship Bourdieu views between status and lifestyle: "We can conceptualize status not as political entitlement but as lifestyle . . . . Social status involves practices which emphasize and exhibit cultural distinctions and differences which are a crucial feature of all social stratification . . . . Status may be conceptualized therefore as lifestyle; that is, as dress, speech, outlook, and bodily dispositions . . . to a certain extent" (*Status* 66). As a result of stratification, lifestyle also becomes a process that conveys status and enables social actors to distinguish themselves from one another and between social groups. Choices and practices in lifestyle are shaped, however, by taste and not solely by income (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 175). Bourdieu maintains that lifestyle can express one's status that is signified by taste, which in turn also reveals one's social class position.

Bourdieu's definition of lifestyle poses a challenge in this study because he does not clearly define the term. According to Jenkins, Bourdieu's definition is too vague and he considers it a limitation: "Class fractions are defined in terms of occupation and employment status. Life-styles, however, are not immediately self-evident. Their constituent practices are scattered across a variety of different fields . . . . The problem could perhaps have been avoided by allocating life-style identities to subjects on the basis of either patterns of social interaction or self-identification" (148). As a result of this

vagueness, Chaney's definition of lifestyle has been adopted due to its clarity and relevance. Chaney defines lifestyle as the practices or "patterns of action that differentiate people" (4-5). These patterns are representative of social "sets of practices and attitudes... [and] the language of forms and styles of status" (Chaney 5) or simply expressions of taste.

Although Bourdieu does not provide an explicit definition of lifestyle, he successfully identifies the "structures" or components of lifestyle:

The dominant class constitutes a relatively autonomous space whose structure is defined by the distribution of economic and cultural capital among its members, each class fraction being characterized by a certain configuration of this distribution to which there corresponds a certain life-style . . . . These structures should be found in the space of life-styles . . . . (*Distinction* 260)

Economic and cultural capital (as well as social capital) configure and relate to specific class-based lifestyles. In other words, class-based capitals foster differentiating lifestyles. If lifestyle is concerned with differences that are predominantly found in social class (economic capital) and status (identified in cultural capital), then how is this differentiation achieved? According to Bourdieu, it is found in the differences of capitals between social groups which exhibit class-produced notions of taste or vice versa; taste exhibits differences in class-dependent and interrelated capitals (*Distinction* 69). As such, these capitals are the definable components of lifestyle as well as modes of taste that act as social markers to categorize lifestyle according to class structure.

Despite the fact that Bourdieu only cites economic and cultural capital as components of lifestyle in the aforementioned excerpt, social capital is cited earlier as

being part of this social space (*Distinction* 114, 124). Social capital is often overlooked as it is frequently discussed in reference to economic capital. However, it can be argued that an open definition of lifestyle that is consistent in its reference to three capitals may overcome the problem of identification mentioned by Jenkins, as social capital refers to access and patterns of social networking. Despite Boudieu's inconsistent definitions of capitals and lifestyle, Chaney (65), Jenkins (130, 149), Featherstone (88-90), and Paterson (43) all agree that the conceptualization of lifestyle is still closely derived from Bourdieu's work and the notion of social marking is integral to lifestyle today. Even more significantly with respect to this thesis is that in spite of his vague definition of lifestyle, Bourdieu effectively conveys the concept of lifestyle in its construction as economic, social, and cultural capitals and as a mode that articulates taste and class.

Given that lifestyle and status are interrelated and personal capital is an assessment of status, these forms of capital also structure lifestyle. Although Bourdieu does not provide an explicit definition of lifestyle, he successfully identifies these three capitals as the "structures" or components of lifestyle (*Distinction* 260). The evaluation of one's social status and subsequently one's taste are largely dependent on the individual's amount of personal capital: the economic, cultural, and social capital that according to Bourdieu is expressed in and structured by lifestyle. Thus, I argue that in order for the celebutante to achieve It, she must embody the media's idealized notions of all three capitals—cultural, economic, and social. This possession entitles and permits her to be considered a legitimate cultural taste-maker for consumer society, thus indicating her cultural authority.

## **Legitimizing Social Mobility through Consumption: Bourdieu and American Media**

### **Framing of the It Girl's Taste**

Taste becomes a marker of both education and social differences as individuals use taste not only to distinguish themselves into different classes, but also to identify and justify the good or correct taste, thereby reinforcing the status quo. According to Bourdieu, the legitimization of social differences and recognizable tastes or codes is largely dependent on cultural capital and is central to the functioning of taste. Taste as exercised through consumption “fulfills a social function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 7). This legitimization is learned and articulated by acts of classification. During the process of classifying (distinguishing or articulating one's taste), the classifier appropriates his or her taste through consumption that is also classified and appropriated by other classes. These classifications become representative of different class expressions for Bourdieu, as “goods are converted into distinctive signs, which may be signs of distinction but also of vulgarity, as soon as they are perceived relationally, to see that the representation which individuals and groups inevitably project through their practices and properties is an integral part of social reality” (*Distinction* 483). This legitimization thus is informed by cultural capital because this capital places a value on taste in relation to class-related understanding and knowledge of aesthetics. Therefore, when one speaks of taste, one is using culturally specific and class-based concepts derived from one's cultural capital.

Applying this interpretation to the It Girl, her taste works to legitimate the elite's notion of good taste as the media have constructed her to function as a taste-maker. In addition, Bourdieu's interpretation of the integral position of fashion being representative

of status is central to the functioning of the It Girl as a taste-maker and class-passer.

Drawing from the work of de Saussure, Bourdieu states that clothing functions as a main sign and symbol from which people judge one's social status and indicate their function as taste-makers (*Distinction* 277-83; 310). He explains that "clothing and cosmetics are a basic element in the mode of domination," through which taste denotes "social-class supremacy" (*Distinction* 311). The struggle for dominance in style will be examined in Chapters 4 and 5 using Bourdieu's three brow model.

By further analyzing Bourdieu's argument on education, the formation or cultural construction of taste and the hegemonic role that is played by taste becomes more evident. Cultural competence is "defined by its conditions of acquisitions" that are informed by class-specific means and "function like a sort of 'trade-mark'" (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 65). Thus it is a form of social marking or class differentiation. He reasons that cultural competence presents itself in one's cultural capital and is easily displayed through lifestyle. Bourdieu writes that "taste is at the heart of these symbolic struggles," where struggles occur between the dominant or high class society and the lower and non-dominant classes and also within each separate class (*Distinction* 310). Therefore, education actively contributes to this struggle by providing access to higher levels of cultural competence as well as protecting the interests of the dominant classes' taste by withholding access to specific education (e.g. studying at a certain institution). Access enables the elites to distance themselves in order to maintain their position (status quo) within the hierarchical taste system. Struggles for dominance in taste as well as economic and political power struggles between the old and new upper-elites will be analyzed within the celebutante culture through the use of Bourdieu's work.

Because taste is in part the product of cultural competency or education, the It Girl functions to educate and then sell her image and associated products to the masses through various media platforms. Due to the structure of the capitalist celebrity system, celebrities are able to educate the masses which allows them to function as taste-makers. Celebrity studies scholars' persistent focus on the celebrities' "selling" function has overlooked the role they play as cultural taste educators. As such, this has limited the consideration of how the media position celebrities to facilitate false notions of class mobility through consumption. Education in taste and lifestyle is a contributing factor that leads the masses to purchase while simultaneously perpetuating the American Dream myth because the celebrity "teaches"—through professional and non-professional performance—the masses that this mobility can be achieved by consumer acts. This is affirmed by Foster who argues that the American Dream is a "fabric" of current celebrity culture (62).

Bourdieu's work is most complementary to my thesis's objectives because it offers the theoretical framework for uncovering the It factor and the celebutante's class membership as it is both concealed and exposed through her binary representations in the press. The rationale to support my choice in applying Bourdieu's theory to the celebutante was also encouraged by contemporary celebrity scholars. These scholars recognize the significance of lifestyle for celebrities to become taste-makers and also identify links between Bourdieu and celebrities. Although Bourdieu's work was published in the 1970s in relation to high culture in France, Marshall explains that "Bourdieu's typology of taste and distinction" can be applied to celebrities in order to evaluate "the construction of consumer lifestyles" in contemporary society because their



taste and lifestyle have helped to significantly classify the masses' lifestyle (92). This view is also echoed in Dyer's work (38-39). Through the association with consumption, the celebrity becomes a "marker" of both taste and status for consumer society (Marshall 245).

Despite the historical presence and the current media popularity of the celebutante and It Girl cultures, these figures remain largely unexplored. The celebutante reveals a dominant and rigid—yet commonly denied—space in the American social hierarchy which will be reflected in an examination of her status. As such, the celebutante has become the twenty-first century It Girl without much social commentary. Research has neglected to examine the social and cultural significance of this trend: What is the It factor? How is the It Girl constructed? What role does taste really play in determining and maintaining the It Girl status? Lastly, why is the It Girl significant? My thesis will examine precisely these questions and will do so through a unique application of Bourdieu's work on taste.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### *Framework*

The significance of taste as personified through the It-ness of the celebrante described in the following chapters is explored through a cultural studies viewpoint. In particular, this thesis seeks to understand the importance of the It Girl from an everyday life perspective. Bennett explains everyday life as an ambiguous term that extends to the day-to-day routines or daily activities that are “the familiar, the taken-for-granted, and the common-sensical” (1). Such examples include: dressing, eating, regular television viewing, and the routine reading of newspapers and tabloids. This sphere is commonly perceived as meaningless and is frequently dismissed as valueless, because it is reasoned that no substantial significance or meaning can be drawn from routines which require minimal consideration or effort by the individual (Bennett 1; Inglis 3-5).

Contemporary cultural sociologists argue that dismissing everydayness undermines human values and limits our understanding of culture. According to Inglis, Simmel was the first to consider “the banal externalities of life” as significant components of culture (3). Simmel argues that these everyday practices are crucial for gaining insight into the beliefs and attitudes of a culture, because they are “expressions of the wider social and cultural order” (Inglis 3). Similarly, Bennett claims that it is actually in the perceived common-sense or the uselessness of everyday practices that both “culture” and “structure” develop a “physical interplay” (1). Within this interplay, practices are useful and meaningful as they provide interpretations of the framing or ordering of the social world. To understand these rich expressions is to better make sense

of the world and of how individuals interact in social life as these expressions carry worthy cultural meanings.

### ***Rationale for Combining Research Methods***

To explore the media construction of Hilton, a combined research method of interpretative and content analysis is employed using a series of different publications including American celebrity weeklies, fashion magazines, and Hilton's publication, *Confessions*. As noted in the introduction, this thesis is largely driven by an interpretative framework taken from Bourdieu and to a lesser extent from Boorstin and from Mills. In an attempt to complement this approach, an empirical approach using visual and textual analyses is performed. The qualitative content analysis provides descriptive evidence of the prevalent settings, social relationships, and commodities around which Hilton's persona and image are constructed in order to better substantiate the theoretical approach of Bourdieu and It as the highly desirable, media-created embodiment of his three capitals. While a content analysis offers understanding on the fundamental categories of celebrity construction, this method is less helpful for revealing cultural meaning and significance. Therefore, the analysis of the celebutante-as-It is mainly based upon an interpretative analysis informed by Bourdieu's, Boorstin's, Foster's, and Mills's theories.

The rationale to combine research methods for this study is not a technique to "fool proof" data results; rather, it enhances rigor by enabling an expansion of the scope of knowledge by permitting different perspectives and insights that may not have been achieved using one methodology (Greene 208-10; Maxwell and Loomis 251-52). A combined research approach in this study answers both the "what" (i.e., What is the It

factor? ) and the “why” (i.e., Why is It significant? and Why is the It Girl always projected as having good taste in spite of her moments of poor fashion choices and behaviour?) of the celebutante/It Girl scene. The goal in combining content and interpretative analyses is to provide more depth to the data analysis. Greene describes combined methods as a research opportunity that “actively engages with difference and diversity” (208) and can provide “generative potential for better, enriched, more insightful understanding” of social issues (207). In order to achieve depth and diversity, I have selected a wide range of media publications for examination and drafted several coding sheets to more adequately reflect the dimensions of the celebutante as the It Girl. This allows for the opportunity to connect further with the integration and meanings of the celebutante in everyday culture as represented in the press. Although combining research methods does not necessarily produce a more valid study or more accurate results (Creswell et al. 210-11; Maxwell and Loomis 251-52), the combination does contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge of our media culture.

Combined research increases this study’s rigor and provides more balance as each of the method’s limitations is addressed by the other method. Interpretative analysis allows for an examination and understanding of social and cultural practices through its focus on description and theorization, which content analysis cannot do. Conversely, content analysis has the ability to count and classify results, which an interpretative analysis cannot produce. Qualitative content analysis classifies texts into categories that represent meanings, but still fails to adequately or thoroughly interpret meanings or consider the social context because the texts’ meanings are fixed into categories (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham 259; Neuendorf 14-15). Interpretative analysis, by contrast,

addresses this limitation as this method is more useful for cultural meaning and significance. Thus, these methods are complementary as the interpretative analysis provides explanation and description whereas the content analysis provides tangible evidence.

Content analysis shares the same limitation as a scientific method with respect to its inability to generate meaning; therefore, the defense of a cultural framework and use of interpretative analysis are both grounded in the capability to produce meaning. This reflects Hall's (1997) constructionist approach to representation. Greene argues that this emphasis on the binary and scientific value of quantitative research within content analysis "misplaces" focus on method by ignoring the actual "work": the formulation of patterns and meanings (211). The decision to use two methods can then also be justified in terms of avoiding misplacement in addition to being complementary. Lastly, with respect to triangulation, it must be emphasized that a combined methodology is not chosen for the purpose of cross-checking irregularities (although it was for the design of the content analysis, as will be outlined). Overall, the combined approach is selected in order to facilitate the study's rigor and comprehensiveness in the analysis and interpretation of results as well as to gain a deeper or more thorough understanding of the social complexities of the It Girl.

### ***Rationale for the Selection of Paris Hilton***

Given that the goal of the thesis is to provide an in-depth analysis, a case study approach is most appropriate. The decision to approach the celebutante through one case study on Paris Hilton was dependent on the richness and depth of media coverage and sources. Substantial regular coverage and exposure in different forms are crucial in the

undertaking of a case study. Initially, this study was to perform three or four case studies: on Paris Hilton, her sister Nicky Hilton, Nicole Richie, and Lauren Bush. However, after a preliminary media scan, it became evident that Paris was the most prominent figure. Paris represents the total embodiment of, or the lead celebutante, in the press, as noted in Chapter 1. Her position and coverage are unrivalled in comparison to all other celebutantes—as well as to many so-called A-list celebrities. British cultural critic Taki states that “Paris underlines our ongoing interest with celebrity-for-the-sake-of-celebrity” in the twenty-first century (qtd. in Oppenheimer 258). The media saturation of Hilton was clearly evident from the preliminary media scan for this study. She is the only celebutante to receive multiple exposure through her television and movie appearances, her branded merchandise, music album, and paid appearances at industry parties, international nightclubs, and fashion shows. As a result of both her scandalous sex tape rise into fame and her vast marketing, she has become a fixed tabloid figure equivalent to the late Princess Diana (“Paris Inc.”).

In addition, this media scan revealed that Nicky Hilton, Richie, and Bush were reported in relation to Paris: Nicky as Paris’s less “wild” sister; Richie as Paris’s “sidekick” and co-star in *The Simple Life*; and Bush as the refined East coast celebutante in comparison to “scandalous” West coast Paris. In terms of cover stories, a quick count again indicates that Paris is the dominant or most significant celebutante. For example, she appeared on the cover of *People* four times in 2004, whereas her sister appeared once; Bush and Richie were not featured on any covers. These latter celebutantes play only minor supporting roles and their press-worthiness is dependent on a connection to

Paris. Therefore, including case studies on those individuals would produce less depth and less exhaustive results for the analysis of the celebutante of the It Girl.

As the most accessible media figure within the celebutante circle, Paris is also the most accessible to analyze theoretically. Her variety of projects and extensive lines of merchandise are comparable to those of top Hollywood celebrities and provide material for numerous theoretical perspectives. This idea is supported by Cashmore and Gamson in CBC's November 2007 documentary entitled "Paris Inc.," where they describe her as a unique personification of both media and consumer culture. Her fame is the result of her name and ability to pose—her "presence"—which changed celebrity reporting as she encouraged the paparazzi into her daily life, and this bizarrely has "fascinated" global, mass audiences ("Paris Inc."). In fact, in 2004 Hilton was named one of the *10 Most Fascinating People of 2004*, according to ABC's Barbara Walter's annual primetime special ("Paris' Most Shocking Moments"). Equally intriguing is her ability to play up different images to the press that sustain public interest. Wolf also dissects Hilton's play of images and argues that her pictorial success is based on her ability "to create a construct that's explicitly sexually available and completely naïve and innocent and girlish at the same time" (qtd. in Smith 289). It is precisely her ability to play with her image and the public's fascination with her presence that captivates my attention and desire to study her. The combination of these specified factors prompt many questions about the significance of Hilton and how she relates to wider issues of American class, gender, and consumption.

The final factor that led to a single case study design was Paris's own publication *Confessions*. The mere fact that Paris was able to publish a how-to-be-Paris pictorial

book reinforces her lead position in the celebutante scene and further justifies the decision to approach this topic through one comprehensive case study. According to Hilton, this book was to provide her audience with “a sneak peak into my very hyped life—so you can know the real me” because too many people “think everything they read about me in the tabloids is true” (4); therefore, the book attempts to restore or modify Hilton’s image as a result of negative press, as suggested earlier in Chapter 2. These surrounding details denote themes of taste and status that elucidate another deeper perspective to analyze in order to formulate a more diverse conception of the It factor and It Girl. Additionally, the inclusion of Paris’s own publication—in which her own management exercised control over her image—enhances the thesis’s strength and validity. The use of three sources (celebrity weeklies, fashion magazines, and Hilton’s publication) establishes a “concurrent triangulation design”: the cross-checking of results through the examination of different perspectives aimed at addressing the complexities of the research topic (Creswell et al. 229). Overall, triangulation attempts to balance the study’s limitations by expanding the research scope and avoiding the bias of one publication in order to obtain a more accurate depiction of Hilton.

### ***Interpretative Analysis***

The interpretative approach is supported through the work of Boorstin and Bourdieu, which has been outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. Boorstin’s analysis is applied to the celebutante for the purposes of conceptualizing a working definition of the celebutante and theoretically accounting for the celebutante’s popularity in the current media climate. Through the use of Boorstin, I argue that the media reinforce the celebutante’s It Girl status, enabling her to function as a consumer taste-maker through



her calculated appearances at manufactured press events which are initially available to her via family connections. The application of Bourdieu's *Distinction* is more significant as it functions as my thesis's primary theoretical model. Bourdieu's work acknowledges the links between taste, status, and class and is useful for my own theorization of how lifestyle figures within the It Girl phenomenon. His work provides the theoretical basis of my thesis's original argument on how the media-produced ideal attainment of Bourdieu's capitals can be considered major elements that define the It factor and construct It Girl status.

Paris's images in the media are assessed in relation to Bourdieu's classifications from *Distinction* to gain insight on the making and unmaking of the It Girl. Elite, or highbrow, taste is constituted by his definition of pure taste, as outlined in Chapter 1, and is representative of the old upper-class. In contrast, non-elite, or middle- and lowbrow taste, is regarded as the binary opposite that is representative of the non-elites and working-class. Although there is no definitive list that constitutes practices and products that signify high/good and low/bad taste, Bourdieu's "Luxury Trade Dictionary" found in *Distinction* also acts as an initial reference (284-286). My knowledge and experience with fashion (codes) are a strength as they will enable the development of a more contemporary, updated dictionary. Bourdieu's work remains highly relevant to the current conceptualization of highbrow taste, because his theory is widely applied within many disciplines as outlined in Chapter 1. More specifically, his work is accepted by many scholars as the framework from which culture can be analyzed as capital forms attained through social practices and activities (Kendall, *Good Deeds* 26).

### *Media Sources*

The rationale for selecting high fashion magazines such as *ELLE*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Vogue* and the celebrity weeklies *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *People*, *Star*, and *US Weekly* is to trace the celebutante across a variety of magazine formats for an exhaustive analysis. These sources, according to Bonner, are categorized as “secondary texts” that offer and promote the celebrities themselves (outside their professional work) as commodities through positioning them with lifestyle (81). Based on Fiske's analysis of fan texts, Bonner uses this categorization to mark the differences in celebrity work and promotion. The “core” or “primary” celebrity texts represent the actual work (e.g., a film, recording, etc.), whereas the “secondary” texts promote a celebrity's private life (Bonner 81). The secondary texts enable a wider analysis of a celebrity's cultural meanings as these texts maintain and produce the celebrity's profile, his or her status, and persona through images and narratives, and thus are ideal for examining celebrities such as socialites (82).

The decision to use fashion and celebrity magazines was also influenced by my previous graduate research which examined Hilton's representation in fashion magazines, celebrity weeklies, and books. In my research, I found that the representation of Hilton's taste was largely dependent on the media source. In addition, I found that approximately one in every four or five articles criticized Hilton's taste-making abilities. The fashion magazines, which are arguably representative of notions of evaluated taste, depicted her taste as being refined, wholesome, and somewhat pure. The so-called tabloid magazines or celebrity weeklies, representative of “low” culture, depicted her taste as being ostentatious, vulgar, and alluded to notions of immorality. These observations were

affirmed by Feasey's work (examining British fashion and celebrity magazines) that found the majority of celebrity-weekly fashion reporting emphasized "style disasters and fashion mistakes"—poor moments of taste—and affordable mass-produced clothing, in comparison to refined "conventions and modalities" narratives of exclusive *haute couture* in fashion's leading publications, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* (184-85). Gamson also articulates a similar position, because he found that tabloids promoted low culture or ordinariness as opposed to *Vanity Fair* which "was forever striving to distinguish the truly 'great' through portrayals of glamorous celebrity lifestyle" ("Greatness" 265). Feasey's and Gamson's work further supports the existence of a taste hierarchy in women's lifestyle publications. However, as Gough-Yates's work implies, this hierarchy is more apparent in women's fashion magazines.

Gough-Yates explains that the global success of "upper" fashion magazines such as *ELLE* is a result of "producing extensive 'lifestyle' marketing" to target "socio-cultural advanced" women "from privileged social categories . . . and [of] higher education" (100-01). These *ELLE* readers are thought to understand and appreciate the "concept" and "style" of such a publication (Gough-Yates 100), much like the mid-30s to early-40s (6 year age difference) demographic of publications such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* that are also marketed as so-called high fashion and lifestyle magazines. In comparison, Gough-Yates found that fashion magazines such as *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* place less emphasis on lifestyle and more on issues around women's self-esteem and sexuality, which serves the interests and tastes of the middle-class target demographic (105, 110). The *haute couture* value, or in other words, the connotation to highbrow culture, class,

and lifestyle in publications such as *ELLE* are sharply contrasted by the non-upper elite fashion and sex discussion in the so-called lower-brow, middle-class publications.

Gough-Yates's research clearly suggests the presence of a homologous taste hierarchy in women's magazines that I also found in my previous graduate work on Hilton.

Celebrity weeklies provide further insight into the construction of the celebrity because they function to commodify the celebrity and celebrity lifestyle. These publications emphasize consumption and offer themselves as a site through which to examine the lifestyle and taste-making abilities of a celebrity. Within the past three years, these publications have quickly replicated themselves to keep pace with the North American obsession with celebrity (De Vries 96); such additions include *In Touch*, *Life & Style* (both owned by Bauer Publishing Co.); *Okay!* (owned by Northern & Shell North America Ltd. which publishes British, Canadian, and American editions); and the short-lived *Celebrity Living* (owned by American Media Inc., which also owns *Star* and *The National Enquirer*). According to recent statistics, every three out of five U.S. dollars spent on magazines are used to purchase a celebrity weekly, which corresponds to ten to twelve million copies being sold to a North American audience each week ("Paris Inc."). An advertisement in *Women's Wear Daily* also reports that *In Touch* weekly's readership grew 25 percent in 2007, the largest growth for any women's magazine during that year (3). The significance of the celebrity weekly and its celebrity-as-ordinary strategy (as discussed in Chapter 2) has become so integrated into everyday life that the *New York Times* on September 9, 2007 declared *US Weekly* "the most important periodical of our time" because the publication "has already put it best: Stars, They're Just Like Us" ("US Weekly").

Unlike fashion magazines, celebrity journalism strives to produce sensationalism and consumer affordability, which clearly articulates a position of lowbrow or what is commonly referred to as “tabloid trash” reading culture (Brottman 43; Johansson 344). Johansson argues that celebrity tabloids or weeklies act as “cultural discourses” by providing knowledge of society’s understanding of status and social mobility (342). These publications discuss this through an open dialogue on “the social contexts of everyday life” and through the portrayal of ordinariness (Johansson 345). The everyday life discourses in these publications are important, because they are not regularly produced in fashion magazines. Celebrity weeklies also serve to fill social voids by publishing gossip (Feasey 190). For the purposes of my thesis, I am interested less in the function of gossip and focus instead on how these texts offer themselves as sites for the negotiation of social identity and the construction of lifestyles from the cultural codes that are depicted in the popular press. By cross-referencing a diverse variety of media sources, my objective is to gain a balanced view of the construction of the It Girl.

### ***Content Analysis***

This study does not present a hypothesis concerning the content analysis, because it is theoretically driven; rather, the content analysis is used to better support the interpretative analysis. I predicted that Hilton would be portrayed in the majority of articles as a good taste-maker with significantly fewer instances describing her as exhibiting bad taste. Hilton’s moments of poor taste are expected to be more evident in the reporting of her lifestyle linked to representations of behaviour stereotypically defined as low class—her 2003 sex tape and 2007 imprisonment. Overall, the It Girl is considered a good taste-maker as the capitalist media system positions the celebrity to be

idealized and emulated, and presents her as a model for class-passing in order to produce and sustain consumer profit. The time frame for the content analysis is between February 2000—which marks Hilton’s first editorial appearance and formal introduction to the masses in *Vogue*—and August 2007, signifying the end of Paris’s post-jail publicity.

Using McCombs and Shaw’s agenda-setting theory, I argue that celebrities, like politicians, become “known” to their public through the mass media:

The information in the mass media becomes the only contact many [people] have with politics. The pledges, promises, and rhetoric encapsulated in news stories, columns, and editorials constitute much of the information upon which a voting decision has to be made. Most of what people know comes to them “second” or “third” hand from the mass media or other people. (176)

To study the commercial representation or reading of a celebrity requires a study on the mass media which led to my decision to use the popular American press for this study. The reasoning for choosing fashion magazines and tabloid weeklies is straightforward: they are easily accessible, centered on themes of consumerism, and the monthly or weekly publications provide the most current, consistent information in order to analyze the celebutante’s lifestyle. Gough-Yates found that the most accessible medium to view and analyze celebrities functioning as a marketable commodity is magazines because they function as sites of advertising and lifestyle promoters (56; 100). In addition, these sources offered both text and visuals which are imperative for analyzing questions of lifestyle because lifestyle emphasizes consumerism (consumption of material goods) and membership or association (with specific people, places, and consumer items).

The use of text and visuals also makes for a thorough analysis, because as Rose notes, “visual images quite often work in conjunction with other kinds of representations,” referring to the short, written descriptions that often accompany art in galleries to provide a solid contextualization (11). The combined use of text and visuals will prove to increase the validity of this study by ensuring that the correct information related to Hilton’s activities and locations is coded. For example, when it is apparent that Hilton is enjoying an evening out but the exact location cannot be identified in the photo (is she at a restaurant, a party, or a nightclub?), the text will then be used to identify this precise location. Proper identification of locations is central to the conceptualization of the It Girl’s social capital. It is expected that the links between the text and visuals will illuminate patterns and themes through the content analysis because lifestyle, according to Chaney, develops patterns and cultural meanings (4). Therefore the ability to identify patterns is critical to this study and further validates the application of a content analysis.

Similar to McCombs and Shaw’s study of the 1968 presidential campaign in Chapel Hill, position and length are the two measures for publication and article criteria. For articles to be scanned in this analysis, Hilton must be present on at least one front cover story of every publication for each time frame. This evidence of position ensured that substantial and comparable content could be analyzed and reflects the agenda-setting hypothesis. For example, there are at least ten other alleged sex tapes and scandals that appeared as featured stories in some magazines while receiving no mention in others. These criteria narrow the vast coverage into “major” themes and articles with issues of “high salience” or depth (McCombs and Shaw 178, 185). Secondly, each article has to meet the following requirements in order to be coded: Hilton must be the article’s main

subject, the visual needs to be more than a facial shot or caption, and the text must be at least a paragraph in length—no text comprised of fewer than three sentences is acceptable.

Based on these guidelines, two significant themes or “frames” have emerged: sex and legalities. The themes were then condensed to the two most prominent incidents in accordance with the agenda-setting theory: a) Hilton’s two biggest sex scandals (the 2003 sex tape and 2004 alleged assault and second sex tape); and b) Hilton’s 2007 conviction and imprisonment. These incidents formed the two major storylines for the content analysis and are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Porno Paris Time Frame

Time Frame (Date)	Number of Weeks	Publications Examined <sup>a, b</sup>
Week of December 1, 2003 to December 29, 2003	5 Weeks	<i>People</i> <i>Star Magazine</i> <i>US Weekly</i>
Week of August 2, 2004 to August 30, 2004	5 Weeks	<i>Vogue</i> (February 2000) <i>Vanity Fair</i> (September 2000) <i>Elle</i> (March 2004) <i>Vanity Fair</i> (October 2005)

<sup>a</sup> Total of 7 publications: 3 celebrity weeklies and 4 fashion magazines.

<sup>b</sup> *In Touch* and *Life & Style* were omitted from this storyline as Canadian distribution was interrupted for *In Touch* and *Life & Style* was not in publication until late 2004.



Table 2

## Couture Convict Time Frame

Time Frame (Date)	Number of Weeks	Publications Examined <sup>a</sup>
Week of May 21, 2007 to July 23, 2003	10 Weeks	<i>In Touch Weekly</i> <i>Life &amp; Style</i> <i>People</i> <i>Star Magazine</i> <i>US Weekly</i> <i>Harper's Bazaar</i>

<sup>a</sup> Total of 6 publications: 5 celebrity weeklies and 1 fashion magazine.

The decision to examine ten weeks of tabloid material is based on the issue-attention cycle of the media to ensure that both the pre- and post-stages were reported for the purposes of maintaining an exhaustive and accurate examination of Hilton (Chyi and McCombs 22). A rigid time frame for the magazines is not required as the issue-attention cycle is not applicable to monthly publications. Overall, agenda-setting theory is used to ensure a rigorous content analysis is performed because it has issued established guidelines for the sample's selection and criteria.

As stated earlier, the content analysis follows a conventional approach because of the limited research performed on the celebutante and It Girl. External validity is maintained in the sampling articles that followed the agenda-setting theory. Internal validity is sustained through the use of triangulation by cross-referencing the results of the fashion and celebrity magazines with an interpretative analysis of Hilton's publication. Both the visual and textual analyses are performed with two accompanying

coding sheets that are coded at a manifest level as a means to explore the articles' and photos' commercial meaning.

The articles are analyzed and coded separately for visuals and text, but similarly on the basis of patterns and themes, according to the abbreviated sample code sheet shown in Table 3 (see Appendix A for the completed visual coding sheet and Appendix B for the textual coding sheet). Reflexivity is achieved by keeping the coding process open to revisions and modifications throughout the content analysis. A pilot series or pretest was performed on a random 15% of the data sample (8 magazines/issues) to ensure that all elements of the celebrity's construction were to be analyzed before the formal content analysis took place. All variables and values are clearly defined, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive, following guidelines outlined by Neuendorf (2002). Multiple responses are only permitted for "theme" variables in the textual analysis as many of the articles contain more than one theme. Variables and values are devised in correlation with Bourdieu's work—related to the three capitals and the luxury dictionary—as well as according to characteristics of taste and lifestyle. A summary is provided in Table 3 below (see Appendix C for the completed codebook):

Table 3

## Sample Coding System from Visual and Textual Analysis

Values Categorized by Variables				
Textual			Visual	
Placement With	Theme	Dress Ratings	Setting	Posing
Prime	Family	Best dressed/ trendsetter	Beauty	Alone
Feature	Friendship	Worst dressed/ fashion police	Café outing	Celebrity/ celebrities
Candid	Jail/legal	Neutral	Dining	
	Celebutantes			
Column:	Leisure activity:	Other	Driving/car	Dog(s)
• Gossip	• Dining		Nightclub	Family:
• Lifestyle	• Partying		Pool/beach	• All
Other	• Shopping		Red carpet premiere:	• Father
	• Sun tanning		• involved	• Mother
	• Other		Red carpet premiere:	• Sister
			• not involved	• Parents
			Shopping	• Sister & mother
			Other	Romantically linked

Intra-coder reliability is not a concern for this study as there was only one coder who kept the process open to revision to ensure reflexivity. The data are collected and scored using

the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 15.5). Overall, the content analysis will examine 83 publications and 155 articles.

***Analysis of Data: Interpreting Bourdieu's Capitals into Variables***

The categorization of variables into Bourdieu's capitals is subjective but is derived from Bourdieu's definitions. The presence of economic capital in this study is measured through variables that emphasize economic resources and Hilton's lineage legacy. These include the photographic and textual presence of the Hilton family, the promotion of Hilton products, philanthropy, and textual evidence of Paris's lifestyle that denotes class position (i.e., lifestyle reflected as expensive or elite). Social capital is measured through the presence of variables such as the photographic and textual presence of the media, her romantic relationships, and her friendships with other celebrities and celebutantes because they indicate Hilton's access and association with social networks that assist in the maintenance of her economic position. Objectified cultural capital is the most accessible variable to measure as a result of the publications' agenda that promotes consumerism and product placements. Table 4 outlines the categorization of variables into Bourdieu's three capitals.

Table 4

## Categorization of Variables into Bourdieu's Capitals

Variables		
Economic Capital	Social Capital	Cultural Capital
• Themes of family	• Posing with celebrity/ celebrities	• All apparel variables
• Posing with family	• Posing with celebutante(s)	• All accessories variables
• Red carpet premiere setting (also measures social and cultural capital)	• Posing with romantically linked male	• All brand variables (also measures social and cultural capital)
• Evidence of cost	• Media construction	• All promotional variables
• Philanthropy	• Themes of friendship (also measures social and cultural capital)	• All setting variables (note: hotel and car also measures economic capital)
	• Themes of romance (also measures cultural capital)	• Posing with or themes of pets/dogs (also measures economic capital)
		• Themes of jail
		• Themes of sex
		• Themes of leisure activities (dining, nightclubbing, vacationing)
		• Themes of trends

It must be emphasized that most variables are representative of more than one capital in accordance with Bourdieu's theory: taste distinctions support class distinctions

and vice versa. For example, Hilton's pets, branding, and settings such as hotel and car represent a combination of economic and objectified cultural capital. Other settings such as a red carpet premiere reflect all three types: it indicates Hilton as part of the new upper elite class (economic capital); represents Hilton's social networks that help maintain her class and status position (social capital); and denotes an indication of her status, as being privileged and celebrated (symbolic capital). Thus, these categories of variables are not always limited to one area; however for purposes of finding evidence that reveals measurements in these areas, the variables are coded to be exhaustive. The interplay between capitals among the identified variables (noted in Table 4's parenthetical material) is discussed in the interpretative analysis in Chapter 4.

This thesis examines the It Girl through a combined research approach of interpretative and content analysis on a case study of the celebutante Hilton. The rationale for the combined approach is justified in terms of comparability and rigor. These methods are proven to be complementary as they each strive to address the other's limitation. As such, this approach seeks to achieve greater objectivity and balance with respect to analyzing the It Girl's lifestyle. Hilton was selected as the sole case study based on her position as the lead celebutante, which enables rich media and theoretical access. Balance and objectivity are also applied to the media sample as three different types of sources are used—fashion magazines, celebrity weeklies, and Hilton's publication—to ensure an exhaustive analysis of the It Girl that combines independent and Hilton-produced material. The theories selected for this study can also be considered complementary. The results of the visual and textual content analyses are accessed and

related to Bourdieu's work in an attempt to acquire a thorough understanding of the It Girl and her relationship to social mobility and consumerism.

## CHAPTER FOUR: IT IN THE AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

### *Popularization of the Celebutante-as-It-Girl*

To have It is to be an It Girl, and to be an It Girl in the twenty-first century is to be a celebutante. The popularization of the celebutante as the new It Girl actually began in Britain and not in America. The British origin is not surprising since much of the American tabloid system and structure has followed Britain's system (Bird 19). *The Independent*, a London newspaper, is credited with drawing attention to the reemergence of the celebutante after questioning the connections that were drawn between a socialite-turned-television-personality and the original It Girl Clara Bow by *Tatler*, a popular British women's magazine. In the article, Aitkenhead establishes the links between the characterization of the celebutante and the It Girl:

The "It" Girls, as few can now be unaware, are a fairly forgettable bunch of Chelsea girls who quite like going to parties. Other crimes include: 1. Spending lots of money on dresses. 2. Being rich, on account of having rich parents. 3. Saying some pretty crass things . . . . 4. Being unaccountably Famous for Being Famous. (par. 2)

Clearly, what Aitkenhead describes is reminiscent of Mair's description of the celebutante (see Chapter 1). It was not until 2001 that *The Independent* referred to celebutantes as socialites-turned-celebrities who are famous for their last names.

Weinberg's article makes direct references to the celebutantes as the new It Girls and points to the examples of the Hilton sisters, Casey Johnson, Lauren Bush, and Amanda Hearst (par. 2, 5). More significantly, Weinberg suggests the presence of stratification



within the celebutante circle between the notorious West Coast celebutantes (Hiltons and Johnson) and polished East Coast celebutantes (Bush and Hearst).

The celebutante and her It Girl title finally received media attention in America in 2002, in spite of the fact that the *New York Post* declared Hilton as the new It Girl on June 10, 2000 ("Paris' Most Shocking Moments"). The mass attention can be attributed to the success of reality television programming. Palmer writes that "lifestyle is a sub-genre of Reality television" and argues that this genre endeavors to instill Bourdieu's traditional positions of social class and taste onto the masses (173, 175-78). In particular, the release of two documentaries, titled *It Girls* and *Born Rich*, along with the MTV television show *Rich Girls*, highlighted the lifestyle of the celebutantes and marked them as the newest It Girls. Although these shows preceded Hilton's *The Simple Life* (2003), the celebutante-as-It-Girl has been popularly attributed to the success of Hilton's show. Regardless of which particular show popularized the term, it is apparent that the celebutante surfaced in mainstream American culture during the era of reality television, and such shows' success is indicative of America's interest in the lifestyles of the ultra-elite, which are central in this type of television programming.

The emergence of the celebutante in the 2000s is an expansion of the socialite-as-the-It-Girl in the 1990s. During the latter years of the 1990s, the socialites began developing "super" or celebrity-like status as a result of media attention (Davis 72-74). As stated in Chapter 1, celebutantes garner media attention due to their glamorous, elite lifestyles and thus are reflective of Lowenthal's mass idol thesis. The notion of the celebutante is best captured in current popular literature by the September 2000 issue of *Vanity Fair* in which the publisher of *Hamptons* magazine describes "the social territory

occupied by the Hilton sisters”: “They’re little stars. They’ve become names. To them it’s like a job. I believe they wake up every morning and say, ‘O.K., where am I supposed to be tonight?’” (Sales 356). This quote prompts a critical assessment of how the celebutantes’s celebrity status is constructed. Boorstin’s classic critique of American consumer society provides a useful framework for such an analysis. Although Boorstin’s definition of a modern (Hollywood) celebrity was published in the 1960s and has been criticized by some celebrity theorists for its emphasis on the media’s role in the construction and interpretation of the celebrity, his work is vastly relevant to the discussion of the celebutante. Boorstin’s analysis represents an accurate conceptualization of the celebutante and still is widely referenced in current celebrity literature. A working definition and theoretical overview of the celebutante is offered by combining Boorstin’s perspective on celebrity and Mills’s perspective on class. Following that, an interpretative analysis drawing from the content analysis will conceptualize the It Girl as the media’s ultimate embodiment of Bourdieu’s three capitals.

### ***The Celebutante: According to Boorstin and Mills***

Boorstin argues that the profit-driven celebrity culture has no association with “greatness” and “fame” (48). The modern celebrity is defined as being “a person who is known for his well-knownness,” whose fame is not dependent on a special achievement as a hero or politician, but rather on public attraction that is self-motivated (Boorstin 58), which clearly captures the essence of a celebutante. Boorstin defines the production of celebrity as “the human pseudo-event,” where contemporary culture has become increasingly more “inauthentic” because events and celebrities are fabricated for the media and never “spontaneous” (57). The notion of “greatness” or talent is substituted by

“fame” or some sort of irrational physical attraction. Similarly, Mills argues that celebrity “talent” is substituted by “a personality” (75). These notions of talent, personality, and attraction are constructed by the sub-industries of public relations and advertising and by Hollywood agents through premeditated events (Boorstin 57; Mills 74). Fame for Boorstin is the result of one’s appearance in constructed spaces like films, but more significantly the celebutante is preserved through her appearance at these pseudo media events. These events focus on the celebutante’s attractiveness and irrational consumer elements in place of talent or any form of authentic greatness.

The success of events and celebrities’ popularity are determined and evaluated in terms of the effectiveness of their media visibility. A celebutante’s status is thereby measured by how much media coverage she receives and in how many television news, magazines, or newspaper headlines she appears. This inauthentic quality of the celebrity is easily identifiable through Boorstin’s comparison between how society attributes fame to a hero and a celebrity—a comparison that was first discussed by Lowenthal. The hero’s fame is based on “achievement” according to Boorstin and created by the individual’s actions, whereas a celebrity’s fame is a by-product of his or her “image or trademark” and is created solely by the media (61). The celebrity’s image is superficially constructed by the industry for profit—whereas the hero’s actions are deemed unselfish and unmotivated by financial benefit. From this perspective, the celebutante is a fabricated, self-promoting image. Drawing on Lasch, the celebutante may also be considered a product of capitalism’s narcissism through which individuals and masses alike have become preoccupied with “self-awareness,” “vanity,” and “self-admiration” (31,71). Her success and status are equally fabricated and not her own as she plans or

frames herself as well as her social position through appearances and associations at A-list Hollywood events and parties that are available to her via her family connections and wealth. Thus the celebutante's celebrity status is "ascribed celebrity" that "concerns [bloodline] linkage" according to Rojek's categorization (18) and is maintained by her attendance at pseudo events.

Expanding on Boorstin's theory, the celebutante can be further conceptualized using Baudrillard's (2001) concept of the "simulacra" to establish the fabricated construction of the celebutante within contemporary culture. Baudrillard asserts that reality itself has become a system of signs and images which no longer refers to any aspect of reality, but rather reflects other signs and images. Signs become arbitrary and meanings and images lose their origins as a result of their intertextuality. For Baudrillard, the postmodern world has become layers of meanings in which the original has become distorted or completely lost within the "hyper-real" (173). He argues that reality then is in a continuous state of the inauthentic where individuals live through the "simulacra"—that of the hyper-real (e.g., experiencing countries through visiting Disney's Epcot Center) (175). Bauman concludes that "the consequence of this is a blurring of the boundary between simulation and truth, image and reality" (qtd. in Bennett 150). In the case of a celebutante, real or authentic talent is not connected to her success as the reality of her fame is an array of fabricated meanings and signs that are constructed by the industry. If one were to uncover each image or layer of the celebutante, there would be an empty center as she is purely artificial given her fame is produced by calculated photo opportunities.

Within a postmodern context, the celebutante is the epitome of Baudrillard's simulation as her "famous for being famous" celebrity is based solely on signs and images which emphasize her lack of authenticity and also the relevance of Boorstin's critique. As her fame and talent have no tangible substance, the celebutante is constructed intertextually through a variety of media platforms. With an undefined meaning or lack of a singular meaning, the celebutante can then use her style to convey multiple categories of taste and meanings. This allows her to effortlessly move from bad to good taste or vice versa. It is this ability to carry various meanings, signs, and tastes that reflect social mobility and supports the notion of the It Girl as a class-passer. Naomi Wolf expresses this same idea in a 2005 *Vanity Fair* article on Hilton, where she states that "she's the perfect Bush-era heroine, because she's all style and no content" (qtd. in Smith 282). Wolf concludes that Hilton functions as an "empty signifier," which enables Hilton to continue to keep the media's attention and admits that she too is fascinated with Hilton's ability to look "pornographic" in one photo and "naïve and innocent and girlish" in the next or within the same photo (qtd. in Smith 289). Her fame is comparable to how representation in a postmodern society substitutes real experience, as Hilton's representation—her It Girl appearance—is a substitute for talent and authentic fame. Therefore, her popularity and rise to fame illustrate yet another hegemonic struggle: fame as the result of media pseudo-ism or fame and popularity as a by-product and/or result of a deeper shift in Western society's fundamental values.

The celebutante exemplifies Boorstin's pseudo-ism that he claims personifies modern celebrity culture. As a result of this logic, it can be successfully argued that a celebutante functions simultaneously and interchangeably as both a cultural taste-maker

and a commodity. Her fame, or in the case of current celebutantes like Hilton, her initial fame, is not maintained by or the result of industry work (e.g., film or television roles) and for any talents, but is derived from appearance and nonprofessional work. The celebutante's role differs significantly from a traditional celebrity whose fame and maintenance of popularity or celebrity status are dependent on work or "talent." It is only as a consequence of Hollywood's manufacturing process and contractual obligations that traditional celebrities are capable of becoming cultural taste-makers and can be promoted as such by the industry through the media. Conversely, by merely appearing, the celebutante promotes a specific lifestyle and hence taste that her face and body sell in the press through photographs. She is "selling" no product or talent other than her "famous for being famous" status as perceived in her lifestyle. Her lifestyle as a form of talent works to enhance her status and helps her to gain cultural authority among the masses.

A final theoretical consideration must be made before a definition of the celebutante is proposed: her pedigree. The emergence of the term celebutante with Hilton is representative of a new social hegemonic struggle that was earlier noted by Weinberg. Ken Baker, editor of *US Weekly*, recently stated in an interview with A&E that Hilton "created the new image of what it means to be young and wealthy in America", an image that was not typical of any former American debutante ("Paris Hilton"). Based on Mills's definition of how elites define upper class, not all celebutantes are members of the "old upper-class status" (33), which is exemplified by Hilton. Rather she is a member of Mills's new upper or *nouveau riche* class. *Vanity Fair's* characterization of Hilton as "a hip-hop debutante" clearly denotes membership in

this new upper-class and the existence of a class struggle between traditional and non-traditional notions of elitism (Sales 350).

Applying Bourdieu's taste model to this example of a hip-hop debutante, "hip-hop" is synonymous with lowbrow taste and can be considered the binary opposite of elite highbrow taste. This is supported by Rose, who discusses hip-hop's origin as being an African-American, working-, and lower-class youth "street" culture that developed from political tensions of race and class (71). Its images in American consumerism are associated with acts of aggression, deviance (by "gangs"), and poverty (Rose 71, 77-78). Rose explains that fashion is central to hip-hop culture because it expresses "local identities" and urban tensions that purposefully violate mainstream fashion codes (80). These codes are violated primarily through "fake" designer clothes and jewelry and "urban warrior apparel" of "over-sized pants," "hoodies," and "tims." By defying established codes legitimated by middle and upper classes, hip-hop becomes a "style nobody can deal with" (81), thereby opposing established traditional identities of the elite that are discussed in Bourdieu's work. To consider Hilton a hip-hop debutante implies that her style and behaviour are not in compliance to the taste of the elites and more notably that her debutante membership is not authentic.

The divide between the old and new upper classes is decided by the *Register* (now commonly referred to as the "Metropolitan 400") developed by Ward McAllister in 1892 in an effort to consolidate the true upper-class (Mills 54-55). According to Mills, membership was only eligible to "those families who by descent or by social standing from other qualifications are naturally included in the best society of any particular city or cities" (55). Mills's statement clearly suggests that American class structure is

contingent on lineage and dispels the myth of the American Dream. Typically, to be an “ancient” family, the family wealth and prestige needed to be between two to four generations old (57). Most significantly, for young women, inclusion in this *Register* meant an invitation to the annual Debutante Ball. In other words, the Metropolitan 400’s daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters were to acquire the title of debutante (Mills 79).

Hilton’s, or any other celebute’s, families are not considered worthy of membership as their names bear too much “notoriety” and are typical of the *nouveau riche* West coast lifestyle (Mills 57). Therefore, they did not merit an invitation to the *Register* or Debutante Ball. Hilton, along with Richie, Johnson, and Stewart, represent the *nouveau* and West coast celebute, while Bush and Hearst represent a more refined East coast celebute (Weinberg par. 5-12). The tension between the *nouveau riche* and old upper-elites connotes traditional American class boundaries. Moreover, because the celebute’s fame is obtained as a result of her lineage that offers her public notoriety and economic and social resources (i.e., Bourdieu’s economic and social capital), it also reflects these class boundaries. This is reminiscent of Lowenthal’s analysis of celebrity culture. For Lowenthal, the media present fame as an open and “accidental” system (139-40). Yet, the celebute’s celebrity is strictly accessible only to females of an elite class. The celebute’s “celebrity” status is dependent on privilege—for simply having a recognizable or famous last name whereas the original fame was achieved by an earlier familial generation.

To summarize, I propose the following working definition: A celebute is famous for her ability to appear which is offered through her lineage. The context of



“appear” refers to her ability to appear in the press; to appear for the camera at the right Hollywood events, with the right people, while aesthetically projecting the right look—and thus appearing to have It. This use of the word “appearance” emphasizes Boorstin’s pseudo-ism, as the celebutante is a calculated construction who “appears” to be famous. She “appears” to lead a glamorous and elite lifestyle by posing for the press. Pseudo-ism also points to the importance of media visibility for a celebutante’s celebrity status. The visibility (or appearance) that expresses lifestyle and consumptional patterns not only substitutes for professional celebrity work—it *is* the professional work. Finally, the word “appear” abstractly refers to Mills’s hegemonic struggle between the old and new upper-elites. It hints to how lineage influences the framing of the celebutante or simply how she will appear in the press: will she be notoriously famous (indicative of *nouveau riche*) or will she be positioned as more reputable (indicative of the old upper-elites)?

### ***General Results***

The content analysis examined 155 articles about Hilton and 343 photos from 83 magazines across 20 weeks spanning 2000 to 2007. Specifically, 90 articles were coded for the Porno Paris time frame and 77 articles for the Couture Convict time frame. Upon completion of the pilot test and the actual analysis, variables and values were further collapsed and narrowed to ensure minimal redundancy and accurate distribution of patterns. This discussion of the results highlights the most significant themes and patterns that emerge in the analysis in order to relate them to Bourdieu’s theory. As a result of this, all variables coded may not be presented in this chapter as they may not have facilitated any results or knowledge on the It Girl (refer to Appendix E for a

complete list of the frequency results charts for all variables in the visual content analysis and Appendix F for the textual analysis results charts).

Of the 155 coded articles, Hilton receives 36 placements or 23.2% for prime or front-page coverage and 35 placements or 22.6% for featured coverage, meaning the article appears in the magazine's table of contents as a featured article for that week or month. In terms of a magazine's weekly or monthly columns, Hilton is the subject of 28 gossip articles, comprising 18.1% of the total articles coded, and she appears as the subject of 35 or 22.6% of the articles for weekly lifestyle columns. Lastly, the analysis found that 15 or 9.7% of the articles present Hilton as the main celebrity in candid articles that report on the most memorable celebrity and style moments of that week or month. At least one article in all magazines except for two issues for the *Porno Paris* time frame and six issues from the *Couture Convict* time frame features Hilton. Therefore, 75 out of 83 publications contain articles that were coded in the analysis.

Overall, these high percentages reflect Hilton's popularity and emphasize the important role lifestyle plays in the maintenance of celebrity culture. In particular, the high percentage of Hilton as the main subject in lifestyle columns, which actually exceeds her appearance in gossip columns, directly supports the claim that Hilton-as-It Girl functions as a consumer (good) lifestyle taste-maker. Even more significant is the correlation between her prime and featured cover percentages, which are almost equal to her lead role in lifestyle articles, because they highlight the significance of lifestyle in both the construction and maintenance of an It Girl.

Results for the frequency in themes support the characterization of Hilton-as-It Girl as a consumer taste-maker and reveal the significance of lifestyle in attaining It-ness.

The majority of the articles focus on Hilton's shopping habits (citing her shopping or reporting on her love for shopping and/or fashion). This theme reveals a frequency of 60 out of 155 articles or 38.7% focused solely on shopping and is followed by family with a frequency of 51 or 32.9% of all articles. These findings on the Hilton family demonstrate Boorstin's notion that the celebrity's coverage is self-motivated and not based on any authentic merit; thus the celebutante's fame is largely dependent on her economic and family connections. Secondly, the dominant themes of shopping and family suggest that It-ness is achieved and maintained through "what" she has (family name) and what she wears, both promoting a glamorous, ideal lifestyle and privileged status illustrated by their display. By applying these findings with a Bourdieurian perspective, my definition of the celebutante can further be defined as being famous for her ability to appear enabled by her economic and social capital. Moreover, the celebutante's displays of social and economic capital can be considered appearances that reflect the hegemonic struggle among the celebutantes. The appearance of these specified capitals is dependent on her lineage which influences the press's depiction of her as either a member of the old or new upper-elite.

In general, the content analysis rendered high percentages of elite concepts of Bourdieu's capitals present in the reporting of Hilton's lifestyle and revealed a pattern in the construction and maintenance of the It Girl: these variables are significant to what it means to be an It Girl as constructed by the media. Also, it should be emphasized that high frequencies and strong presence of these patterns do not automatically equate into the It factor as an interpretative analysis is necessary to understand the significance and meanings of the counting and classification.

### *Account of It as Conceptualized Using Bourdieu's Capitals*

It-ness is described as a media-produced form of taste and also as a precondition of celebrity; however, to possess the totality of the It factor is to be an It Girl who is recognized by the media as having achieved an ultimate or highest level of emulation for a female star. Celebrity status is crucial to its attainment, but fame is not solely responsible for reaching It Girl status. For instance numerous females are or have been famous without ever attaining any element of It. Fame achieved without the It factor occurs due to non-inheritance ascribed fame, where celebrity status is the result of a sociopolitical event (e.g., Monica Lewinsky and Ashley Dupre in their involvement in politician sex scandals or former Iraqi soldier Jessica Lynch, whose fame occurred in November/December 2004 when Hilton's sex tape was released). Lifestyle becomes a determining factor for attaining It Girl status due to the fact that status, as Bourdieu argues, is revealed in one's lifestyle.

Given that It is arguably the highest (the "ultimate" or most sought after) attainment level in taste (constructed by the media), and that lifestyle is also an articulation of taste structured by Bourdieu's three capitals, it follows that the It Girl's lifestyle expresses elitist displays of capital. Thus the It factor can be defined and conceptualized by these elite and idealized notions of Bourdieu's capitals. The It Girl as a taste-maker is built around visual settings and textual themes of lifestyle—the main narratives of fashion and lifestyle magazines. As such, the performed content analysis attempted to gauge these capitals with the associating variables listed in Table 4 in Chapter 3. The analysis found that the presence of these capitals is high and remains consistent in the examination of Hilton throughout the sample for both time frames,

where the evidence of elite objectified cultural capital is most visible followed by elite economic, and then social capital. This suggests that the construction and maintenance of the It Girl is dependent on elite lifestyle reporting that favours who she is (her so-called profession, family, and class: representative of economic capital), what she is doing or wearing (representative of objectified cultural capital), and with whom she associates (social friends, boyfriends, celebrities: representative of social capital) and supports the thesis's contention that the It Girl lifestyle can be conceptualized by elite notions of Bourdieu's capitals.

The three largest coding categories used to examine variables of (visual) settings and (textual) themes support the notion of the It Girl as embodying elite levels in the respective capitals in her lifestyle. In the coding of visual settings, the economic/social/objectified cultural capital setting of the red carpet is most dominant (accounting for 25% of the sampled photographs), followed by the objectified state of cultural capital setting of Hilton shopping (coded in 14% of the entire article sample). The reverse is found in the textual themes where the objectified cultural capital theme of shopping was most dominant in 38.7% of the articles, followed by the economic capital theme of family at 32.9%. While the visual variable that examines who Hilton was photographed with found her posing alone in 54.8% of the photo sample, there still is a strong presence of economic and social capital that is counted for in approximately 40% of coded photographs.

The most significant setting in the portrayal and maintenance of the It Girl status is red carpet premieres. A total of 89 out of 343 photos (or 26%) explicitly feature Hilton posing on the red carpet. The red carpet projects both an economic capital—as it

signifies her occupation (her celebrity) or what Bourdieu terms a “class fraction”—and a social capital, as the red carpet is symbolic of one’s social network as a glamorous A-list star, which in turn denotes elite status or symbolic capital. This is supported by Gundle and Castelli who argue that red has become “incorporated into the symbolic language of Hollywood cinema” (116); “red is theatrical and is associated with dramatic entrances . . . and glamour” (112). For Gamson, the red carpet personifies Boorstin’s “pseudo-ism” because it is constructed to represent “glamour” that establishes emulation and sells the celebrity’s status or “name” (*Claims* 59, 61-62). Lastly, red carpet premieres also indicate cultural capital due to those notions of glamour and appearance that emphasize fashion, which is inevitably linked to consumerism. For the purposes of organization of this analysis, objectified cultural capital in relation to fashion is discussed in Chapter 5.

The articles’ text identifies that 41 or 12% of the photographs feature Hilton at premieres that she was directly involved with (meaning they were part of her professional work—comprising the “celeb” element of the celebutante) and 48 or 14% photograph Hilton at premieres that she was not professionally involved with (meaning they were more part of the socialite or “debutante” element of the celebutante). It must be noted that the red carpet (coded as red carpet involved) variable is particularly high because the sampling time frames fall within periods of professional work. The Porno Paris time frame reflects a high level of professional work: the premieres of the first two seasons of Hilton’s reality television show, *The Simple Life*; hosting the 2004 *Teen Choice Awards*; and her September 2003 book release. Despite the premiere of the last season of *The Simple Life* in May 2007, the number of incidences did decrease in the Couture Convict (second) time frame. The lack of professional work appearances can obviously be

attributed to her impaired-driving related charges and subsequent imprisonment. Overall, these findings further support the concept of the It Girl as an embodiment of appearance, where she uses the red carpet as an axis for her celebrity. In fact, VH1's *All Access*, a semibiographical series focusing on celebrity lifestyle, claims that Hilton's fame is the result of appearing in places, specifically on red carpets, because she understands that they provide the most media exposure and that a celebute's "celebrity" is reliant on appearance and publicity ("Paris' Most Shocking").

The textual themes from the analysis also indicate the It Girl's lifestyle and thus It-ness is comprised of an idealized embodiment of economic, social, and objectified cultural capital, and thus provides direct evidence that supports a reading of Hilton as a good and bad taste-maker. Only 5.8% of coded articles focus on non-lifestyle themes (coded as "other" and most were reviews of her professional work) in spite of the fact that the sample concurred with her widely publicized professional projects mentioned in the preceding paragraph. These results reveal that approximately 94% of all articles on Hilton focus on her glamorous lifestyle, which demonstrates that It is represented by elite notions of Bourdieu's capitals.

The third highest variable for the category of themes involves articles on jail/legal issues that represented 49 or 31.6% of all the coded articles, thus demonstrating that scandal and bad taste do occur during the reign of an It Girl. This firmly establishes the It Girl as exhibiting poor taste in lifestyle through acts and behaviours that contradict the elite's so-called pure taste. These instances represent moments of poor status as the media associate this conduct with stereotypes of non-privileged classes (Kendall, *Framing Class* 69-71). As my interpretation of Bourdieu's concept of pure taste

suggests, these acts violate the elite notion of good taste, and hence of what is acceptable as elite behaviour. Kendall states that media “frame” the upper-classes’ involvement in crime with “silver linings” that “send divergent messages about wealth and how the rich conduct their lives” (*Framing Class* 88). Hence this emphasizes class distinctions and strengthens the rigidity of class boundaries, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, sex as a coded theme resulted in a frequency of 17 articles or in 11% of the sample, making it almost equivalent to themes of romance and dining. These articles particularly report on Hilton’s sex tape and how her tape affected Hilton and her family. Variables in themes indicate a firm presence of the It Girl’s different displays of taste and suggest that poor taste and scandal are both relevant issues in the media portrayal of an It Girl.

The last dominant category that attempts to demonstrate elite notions of Bourdieu’s three capitals in the It Girl lifestyle is the variable that coded who was posing in photographs with Hilton. As stated, the majority of photographs only contain Hilton; however there is a significant presence of economic and social capital. Her family is featured in 12% of all the photographs coded and her celebutante friends in 10.2% to become representative of social capital, which serves to reinforce economic capital. Social capital is represented by the variables of Hilton posing with fellow celebrities, her boyfriends (romantically linked males classified into past, present, and rumoured in the content analysis codebook), and through the presence of media construction which highlights the social access and networks the It Girl has to Hollywood production modes or resources. In all, Hilton posing with indicators of social networks represent 32% of the coded photographs: only 3.5% are with other celebrities, 8.1% with a boyfriend, and



20.4% of all photographs feature some element of media construction either by the presence of paparazzi, industry personnel, fans, or a combination thereof.

Although this (Hilton photographed with) category was initially conceptualized as an attempt to measure elite forms of social capital, it proved to be most difficult to measure in part due to Bourdieu's vague definition and inconsistent use of social capital in his own work. As a result the classification was expanded when a pattern emerged. The content analysis revealed that the portrayal of her family and her celebute friends is used as economic capital and not only social capital in the articles to reflect her as being privileged at times when Hilton's It Girl status is threatened by lapses in taste—her sex tape, impaired-driving arrest, and imprisonment. During December 2003 with the release of Hilton's first sex tape (from the Porno Paris time frame), this pattern is most visible as each celebrity weekly for this month began to print fewer photos of Hilton alone and more with her family. In fact, the ratio of Hilton posing with her family compared to posing alone in *Star* is extremely high at 2:1, where at least 2 photos in every article for each week featured Paris and at least one family member. This finding seems to suggest that when Hilton's It Girl status is challenged, she attempts to keep the media's attention by relying on Weber's traditional notion of status: her family legacy. This discovery also supports Bourdieu's claim that economic and social capital frequently overlap. Further discussion of this pattern will be expanded upon using Kendall's critique on media framing in Chapter 5.

The content analysis provides substantial evidence to further support my thesis's arguments: *It* is the conceptualization of the ideal attainment of Bourdieu's three capitals and represents an image of conflicting tastes. The emphasis on economic and objectified

cultural capital indicate that the It Girl's lifestyle is more concerned with or constructed around who she is (class membership and family: economic capital), where she is, and what she wears (objectified cultural capital) with a supporting notion of who she is with (social capital). These latter elements of an It Girl's lifestyle were found most often in themes of objectified cultural capital (articles and photos) on shopping/fashion and at Hollywood events rather than in themes of other associations or friendships with actors (and other celebrities) or through her romantic relations. The definition of the celebutante proposed at the beginning of this chapter provided the appropriate context needed to support the claim of the celebutante-as-It-Girl. Additionally, the intent is to provide insight for further research on celebrity culture and to illustrate issues of taste, class, and gender. To complete the analysis, attention will turn toward Hilton's taste-making abilities in order to understand how It-ness defies traditional relationships between taste and class.

## CHAPTER FIVE: TASTE-MAKING AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

### *Legitimizing Taste: The It Girl as a Cultural Educator*

Fashion and celebrity magazines position the celebrity as a cultural educator: a figure who legitimates taste (to use Bourdieu's term) or sets standards in taste. This is mainly achieved by educating and encouraging the masses to buy consumer products within the celebrity-as-ordinary narrative offered by Gamson and the affective relations tactic offered by Marshall in Chapter 2. These narratives however, according to Foster, naturalize the notion that social mobility may be achieved through consumption (64-66). Cultural education, identified in Chapter 2 as an education in taste and lifestyle, informed by the celebrity works, to produce what Bourdieu terms "socially recognized tastes" for the masses (*Distinction* 294), while still legitimating the status quo for the old elites. This maintenance is accomplished because the emphasis on the value in recognizing elite taste and subsequent acts of consumption mislead the consumer into believing that social mobility is accessible through consumerism. Therefore, it encourages the acceptance of elite taste and of the American Dream, which enables the old elites to maintain their privileged position. Furthermore, as owners of the American media and consumer industries (which is the premise of Mills's "power elite" argument) the old elites profit from the consumption of recognized tastes.

Cultural education or competency in consumerism can be achieved through lifestyle magazines due to this legitimization of standards in taste. Purchasing a fashion or celebrity magazine is only the first step toward achieving an education in good taste. These magazines operate as foundational sites that provide the "notable" rules (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 291) and are sites that advance the American Dream myth. Application of

these rules and standards is accomplished through the purchase of the recommended consumer goods promoted by the celebrity, which can include clothing and accessories, restaurants, leisure activities, and vacation destinations. By applying these rules (through purchase), a consumer is projecting a culturally savvy or informed knowledge of consumer codes that signifies good taste. This in turn seeks to reflect a luxurious, elite lifestyle and membership in a more privileged status group (Chaney 14-15; Simmel 544-45). The selling cycle of these products in the publications only becomes viable through the consistent positioning of such celebrities who, like the It Girl, validate notions of elite taste and, ideally, It-ness. Hilton is positioned as a cultural educator through product or brand placement in approximately 77% of all articles with a high frequency of 119 articles out of the total of 155 articles coded. Consistent with the theoretical work on the It Girl and celebutante through the use of Boorstin discussed in Chapter 4, the selling of her professional work at 27.7% (frequency of 43) is secondary to her role as a taste-maker.

### ***Social Mobility in the Media's Portrayal of the It Girl's Lifestyle and Taste***

Through a combination of photos and text in this study's sample of magazines, the It Girl serves as a legitimate cultural educator and taste-maker who offers an experience of class mobility via consumption. The most obvious form of taste-making in the fashion and celebrity magazines occurs in the areas of style or fashion. Efforts to increase one's fashion competency are easy to identify in this study's selection of magazines. Their dominance is self-evident as these publications are built upon the premise of tasteful lifestyles. Bourdieu explains that fashion is an articulation of taste and has become a significant social marker, as previously stated in Chapter 2 (*Distinction*

311). Crane and Chaney each express a similar position arguing that “fashion’s significance” arises from its ability to “bridge social and personal identities” (Chaney 134). Following Bourdieu’s argument, cultural competency informs personal identity and reflects an upward social identity of possessing good taste and thus the illusion of being part of a privileged class. Knowledge and access to informal education in legitimate taste have become more readily available to all classes due to the expansion of mass media and the emergence of the celebrity as a cultural authority that have occurred since the publication of Bourdieu’s work.

Although It-ness for consumers can never fully be achieved, because they are not the celebrity and thereby do not possess authentic celebrity status, consumers are able to buy the presence of It (which signifies the highest level or attainment of good taste) and thus an illusion or simulated experience of social mobility through purchasing and consuming celebrity taste. Foster argues that consumerism “enacts[s] movements across class and afford[s] us a class-passing space where audiences can vicariously and safely experience a shared subjectivity with the class-passer” (8). Moreover, she claims that because the public is consuming performance, class boundaries are reinforced as upward mobility is portrayed as “rigid” and this helps to reaffirm the status quo (8). These consumer acts project cultural competency and an elevated status among a faceless mass and in return facilitate the selling of the celebrity and social mobility. Desirability is manifested in celebrity emulation and in the expression of a status position that signifies an advanced level of competency and an upwardly mobile position. Yet this competency and experience are not achieved by all and nor are they (and status) a substitute for class membership, as access and application are costly. Advanced knowledge and application

of good taste in addition to elite class membership and celebrity status are fundamental to what It is—a combination that enables It-ness to remain unattainable by most of the masses. The right or good taste education is informed by the celebrity and the ideal taste education is informed by the It Girl who also offers an imaginary class-passing experience.

Shopping as a social practice can be considered a prime site for projecting cultural competency (and subsequently It-ness) because, as Cashmore claims, “shopping is now considered glamorous, not utilitarian” (13). This notion is clearly exhibited by the It Girl in the content analysis as photographs of her shopping experiences constitute 14% of the total sample and are the main theme of 38.9% of coded articles. Due to shopping’s departure from the functional and its dominance in the It Girl lifestyle, fashion for the working and lower classes may not be simply dependent on practicality or utility as Bourdieu argues. Rather, in accordance with Cashmore’s and Crane’s perspectives, the development of consumer culture has enabled fashion to articulate themes of personal and social identity for various classes.

As well, it may be argued that fashion for the non-elites is not only based on imitation as Simmel’s and Veblen’s work contends, but may be the result of a new legitimate taste education that the consumer learns from the celebrity. From that, Bourdieu’s expression of “cultural reproduction” can be applied to the individual who has learned good taste from legitimate or culturally authorized sources. Stacey’s work with female audiences and stars can be used to support this as she found that acts of celebrity emulation lead to “the production of a new self-image” (156).

With respect to the It Girl, the emphasis on glamour and not on utility in consumer culture enables her to easily “play” the role of a taste-maker, educator, and class-passer due to the origin of the It Girl’s persona: its basis in glamour. Although there is a sense that the celebrity is duplicating Veblen’s “conspicuous consumption,” Mills argues that Veblen’s work cannot be applied directly to the celebrity as the celebrity system is not based on traditional forms of prestige (as celebrity status is constructed and all celebrities are not from similar class backgrounds) and therefore his theory did not account for these new twentieth-century elites (58-59). Moreover, celebrities’ displays of status are not attempting to imitate other groups; it is about selling an image or product through a constructed status in order to maintain their own position. The concept of imitation is further complicated by the celebrity-as-ordinary selling narrative, which attempts to reposition the celebrity as relatable while still maintaining some distance for celebrity emulation. Celebrity consumption can then be reasoned as a result of a legitimate taste education, a desire to class-pass, a form of emulation, or a combination of any of these. However, the role of capitalism in relation to consumption, status, and the new celebrity system has not been addressed by Veblen, or Weber, as their work was produced in the early years of the twentieth-century (before the establishment of the modern Hollywood system and of a global marketplace) and its application is limited in this analysis. Overall, themes of fashion are found to be significant in the attainment and maintenance of It, as shopping comprises 38.7% of the articles and Hilton’s ability to correctly project a lifestyle trend occurs in 14.2% of the sample.

### ***Evaluation of Hilton's Taste-Making Abilities: Good Taste***

Direct measures of Hilton's taste-making abilities are coded in the dress rating variables from the textual analysis that counted and classified the number of incidences in which she was described as a good taste-maker as opposed to a poor taste-maker.

Drawing on Bourdieu, Hilton as "best dressed" or a "trend setter" signifies legitimate taste and elite class, whereas "worst dressed" or a "fashion victim" signifies the third-tier level of taste (popular taste or lowbrow). It was found that more than a quarter (26.5%) of the coded articles made direct judgments on Hilton's taste: 19.4% consider her "best dressed" and 7.1% consider her "worst dressed." Binary frequencies are also engaged by variables examining the market price of items that the It Girl (Hilton) was wearing, was promoting, or was associated with according to the labeled evidence of cost in the visual content analysis. Here direct comments on Hilton's taste as expensive and exclusive (names of the variables) are comparable to Bourdieu's concept of legitimate or high taste and class and are opposed to the variables labeled for inexpensive and exclusive. These variables signify another tactic to reveal It as being both elite and unattainable, while they also indicate perceptions of lowbrow taste and are stereotypically linked to the working-class. Their results are quite similar to dress ratings: a frequency of 35 articles or 22.6% for those articles where Hilton's taste is referred to as expensive and 13.5% or a frequency of 21 for her taste as exclusive, contrasted against a frequency of 10 or 6.5% of the sample referring to Hilton's taste as inexpensive and a frequency of 7 or 4.5% as nonexclusive.

Aside from the straightforward "Best and Worst Dressed" lists, the It Girl as best dressed is primarily positioned in "star style" narratives that Feasey's work has identified



(180). Such narratives encourage readers to “steal” her style by offering a recreation of Hilton’s look at a more affordable price (e.g., “StarStyle” in *Star*, “Steal that Style!” in *In Touch*, and “Personal Shopper” in *Life & Style*). Bourdieu’s concept of socially recognized taste applies here as these fashions are “translated” from expensive, unattainable *couture* fashion houses to the attainable, mass-marketed brands. For example, *US Weekly* offers female readers “Summer Sequins at Every Price” in styles that are similar to what Hilton is photographed wearing (79) and *Star* provides a style guide to “Paris & Nicole’s Simple Life 2 Style!” that both promotes the television show and offers an emulation of celebrity style (76-77). The other popular narrative encourages spontaneous purchases featuring Hilton wearing the “hottest” fashion items. These narratives not only focus on a single fashion item or restaurant, but they also recommend that readers visit specific stores and further advance the notion of an It Girl as a lifestyle educator rather than simply function as a site of emulation. *US Weekly*’s “Attention Shoppers!” which features a two-page spread on “L.A.’s hippest hot spot” Kitson, located on Robertson Boulevard, is an example of this. This article provides readers with a variety of “A-List Looks” and clothing that Hilton has purchased. Fashion diversity is encouraged while still maintaining Hilton’s appearance or position of ideal taste through the promotion of her personal taste.

There is no denying the role that the It Girl and all celebrities play with respect to emulation or imitation; however what I am proposing is that this role is secondary to providing consumers with a taste education. It is through this process of educating that Hilton is positioned by the industry as an ideal taste-maker to be emulated by the masses. In simple terms, one needs to become informed or “taught” (celebrity) style in order to

emulate celebrity taste, or even to reject it (thereby not emulating celebrity taste). Furthermore, Stacey argues that female audiences will only emulate or accept identities that are relatable and will rework this “star identity” to better reflect their own self-identity (157). Attainable forms of emulation are shown through images of Hilton wearing apparel where the designer logo is visible, and this is found to occur in 12.5% or a frequency of 43 in the photo sample, whereas legitimate levels of cultural competency are needed for the majority of the apparel Hilton is wearing, as 29.2% (frequency of 100) are dependent on brand recognition. Thus imitation is only possible through knowledge of fashion codes.

Similar results are also found in coding Hilton’s designer shoes and handbags that (see Appendix E). Brand recognition can also signify cultural competency by an abstract application of Bourdieu’s three-level taste model in another way, wherein the lowest level of cultural competency is represented by popular taste and requires no recognition of brands as the text identifies them (which occurs in 17.5% of the coded photographs). Middle-brow taste levels are represented by visible displays of brand logo that require no textual identification (12.5%), and lastly knowledge in the advance legitimate taste level is representative of implicit knowledge of codes where brands can be identified by the consumer through codes such as structure and fabric, that require no textual or visible logo identification (29.2%). This can be considered a symbolic struggle as the It Girl tries to distance herself from themes of emulation through the portrayal of clothing that requires a highly competent taste education and, more significantly, is representative of the attainable/unattainable lifestyle dichotomy.

Feasey contends that there is evidence to signal that these magazines offer lessons in discriminating tastes (184). The last popular narrative found in the content analysis demonstrates this by photographing celebrities wearing the same outfits and awarding one as being the better dressed based on the way that she accessorizes the outfit (shoes, jewelry, handbag, hair, etc.). *In Touch*'s column "Who Wore It Better?" best exemplifies this as the commentary provides sound rationale in the magazine's choice to designate Paris as being better dressed: "While Serena's [Williams] round-toe pumps are ideal to help balance out the flashy sequins on this Alice + Olivia mini, the super-short length is too extreme. Paris's longer and fuller hem is more flattering . . . and also lends a dash of elegance to a wild style" (9). Like much of the fashion commentary in lifestyle magazines, this supports traditional notions of femininity that have been noted in Feasey's research (180). Thus elegance operates as a traditional signifier of good taste and reflects a concept similar to Bourdieu's notion of highbrow taste.

Traditional femininity as expressed through elegance is the main tactic used to signify good or so-called pure taste in the analyzed fashion magazines. In order to maintain their elite position, as supported by the discussion of Gough-Yates in Chapter 3, these publications sought to position the It Girl with high class and good taste stereotypes that emphasize class differences. She is featured wearing luxury brands that are included in Bourdieu's "Luxury Trade Dictionary" and many of her pictorials associate her with feminine, elite lifestyles that reflect Bourdieu's discussions of elite taste (*Distinction* 284, 286). Corresponding to his dictionary, Hilton is featured wearing Dior, Cartier, and Yves Saint-Laurent in the examined issues of *ELLE*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Vogue*. Her style is indicative of traditional femininity or WASP style in the elaborate debutante-like gowns

(*ELLE* and *Vogue*), sophisticated “Jackie-O” coats and oversized glasses (*Harper’s Bazaar*), and simplistic Grace Kelly-esque pantsuits (*ELLE*). Expanding upon this dictionary through D. Thomas’s work (2007) on modern luxury, the list of elite taste should also include other Parisian design houses such as Chanel, Givenchy, and most recently Christian Loubtain (105-106, 325) which are even more predominant in these magazines. Lastly, designs from the top Italian design houses of Gucci, Versace, and Dolce & Gabbana, referred to in Lim’s work as glamorous forms of “movie and rock star style” (70, 89, 93) are present in *Vanity Fair* and *ELLE*. By contrast, Giorgio Armani, who represents “the taste for understated elegance . . . customarily associated with old wealth” according to Gundle and Castelli (134), is featured in *Harper’s Bazaar*’s cover story on Hilton.

So-called elite, old upper-class taste is also displayed in these magazines’ editorial photo shoots that use themes consistent with Bourdieu’s characteristics of pure taste. Equestrian in *Vanity Fair* (2005), gallery setting in *Vogue*, and holidaying in France in hotels decorated with antique furniture in *ELLE* are the settings and themes for Hilton’s editorial photo shoots. Bourdieu explains that these specified examples are “the most expensive and prestigious activities” for the elite class that demonstrate both economic and cultural capital (286); thus they support the notion that the It Girl is comprised of pure, elite taste, which is associated by the media with traditional highbrow forms of femininity. However, from an old elite perspective, it can be argued that her representation in the fashion magazines is actually a form of class-passing. By exhibiting and associating herself with pure forms of elite taste, the celebutante is attempting to class-pass as an authentic old upper-elite when in reality she is part of the *nouveau riche*.

This argument further demonstrates Bourdieu's symbolic struggle in taste and reinforces the fantasy of class-passing through consumerism.

With over 25% of the sampled articles commenting on Hilton's taste-making abilities, this finding again provides empirical support to the It Girl as a significant taste-maker and It-ness as conceptualized by Bourdieu's capital argument. Judgments on Hilton's taste through the described binary variables equate into approximately 68% of incidences where the It Girl is portrayed as a good taste-maker and 25% where she is portrayed as being a bad taste-maker. These figures support my notion that the It Girl is not a static icon of good taste as she embodies both good and poor taste-making abilities. Since these incidences of good taste have been accounted for, attention will now turn to theorizing incidences of bad taste and methods of restoring her taste.

### ***Evaluation of Hilton's Taste-Making Abilities: Bad Taste***

The excessiveness of the It Girl's lifestyle results in many moments of bad taste that the media often ignore or revalue into an elite concept of taste in order to maintain a fixed notion of the It Girl as being high class and well dressed: an image of good taste. These moments occur in both her style and etiquette as exhibited by her behaviour. Moments of bad taste or examples of what I referred to as poor-taste-lifestyle (see Chapter 2) are cited by *Vanity Fair* as representatives of the "poor little rich girl" narrative, but are distanced from one's It-ness. This narrative is used to describe Sedgwick's and Frazier's lifestyle, whose drug addictions were shielded behind their "glamorous" press images and contrasted with their traditional, privileged upbringings (Peretz 317). Peretz frames the excessiveness, the moments of bad taste, as occurring after each females' It Girl reign. Such a claim of a poor-taste-lifestyle occurring after

these females' reign of It is incorrect as this excessive lifestyle occurred during the height of their fame and thus contributed to the public's interest in It-ness. Furthermore, much of what upper-class New York society claimed to be bad taste in the example of Sedgwick's flamboyant style, Bow's risqué "flapper" style, or Frazier's over-done glamour is what attracted photographers and fashion designers and thus facilitated media attention. In fact, their moments of bad taste as perceived by the elites are ironically revered and have led these females to be regarded as fashion icons (Feldman 126; *The Real Edie*). Therefore, moments of bad taste or poor-taste-lifestyle must be considered a primary part of the It Girl that enhances her It-ness.

The It Girl's bad taste and excessive lifestyle have completely revealed themselves only within the past five years. Due to the extensive reporting of celebrities' lifestyles and the twenty-four hour news cycle, every It Girl's fashion or etiquette "hiccups" are captured and instantly reported on multiple media platforms. Kate Moss's 2006 cocaine scandal exposed the authentic character of her "poor taste heroin chic" style (Bettez Halnon 503); after years of relentless speculation of drug use, her style was still deemed incessantly iconic by *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* (Gill 350). In 2007, Moss was hired by British company TopShop to design her own clothing line that, in September 2007, was featured in Barneys New York's Manhattan central store and was sold out within hours (Edelson). Nicole Richie's 2003, 2006, and 2007 arrests for impaired driving and possession of illegal substances did not violate her position as "Hollywood's new style icon" or prevent her from "topping the best-dressed lists and inspiring legions of clones," according to *US Weekly* (Cohen 64) and *Harper's Bazaar* (Brown 140). Most infamously, Hilton's 2003-04 sex tape scandal(s) and 2007 impaired-driving conviction

did not negatively affect her image or the production of her clothing line. Rather, like Moss, it revealed the authentic quality of her style that has been described as “rude glamour”—which clearly depicts the existence of conflicting forms of taste (Bleckmann 79). The intense media celebrity coverage of the It Girl leaves no doubt or question that the poor-taste-lifestyle is an integral component to It rather than occurring after an It Girl’s reign as proposed by Peretz in *Vanity Fair*. It is not a fixed image of good taste and instead is socially mobile.

Hilton’s portrayal as a poor-taste-lifestyle producer is the result of her sex tape and imprisonment. A pattern in the content analysis reveals that the comments on her poor taste-making skills are directly related to her behaviour and are contrasted with traditional notions of femininity that differentiate old upper-elite women from the non-elites and the new upper-elites. Such brief examples include a *US Weekly* “Fashion Police” column—“Paris’s Prison Stripe Style: Paging the Hamburglar! The hotel heiress has always been fond of jailhouse fashion”—and the magazine’s dedication of the entire week’s column to mocking Hilton’s taste (92). Photographs and comments are centered on occasions when her apparel or accessories were striped and concluded that her taste is consistent with a “jailbird”: tasteless and representative of stereotypes associated with the lower-class. Similarly, *People*, offered an article entitled, “Who needs an amateur sex tape to generate excitement? Not Paris Hilton, who has been turning heads for years with her outrageous fashion,” and readers were encouraged to “vote on taste: trashy, sexy or a little bit of both?” through its website (“Checking into the Hilton” 8). The article’s headline: “Checking into the Hilton” clearly attempts to mock the contrast her elite

upbringing with her fashion choices and involvement in a sex tape, style and behaviour that are not typically associated with young socialites or debutantes.

Additionally, the Hilton sisters' first cover story in *Vanity Fair* as "hip-hop debbs" conceptualized the culture of the celebutante (as presented in Chapter 4 and supported by my analysis of Rose's work) through the incorporation of images of Bourdieu's characteristics for both upper and lower classes. These images are sexualized and project hip-hop culture stereotypes. The article features Paris in fishnet and faux-leather clothing that sharply contrasts with her expensive bling-laden accessories and luxurious elite *nouveau riche* backgrounds of a Rolls-Royce and her late grandmother's French-baroque inspired Beverly Hills home. These images signify the tensions between old and new upper classes. Hilton's taste can be considered using Gronow's phrase, "challenger of the old culture" because she aesthetically provokes a reconsideration of good taste and its connections to "goodness and virtue"; and to morality (287).

These magazines are not only eager to point out the It Girl's "fashion *faux pas*" that are now common in celebrity weeklies as described by Feasey (184), or the excessiveness of her "high" lifestyle, but they also are represented as acts of transgression: sins of taste in relation to class exhibited by the It Girl's lifestyle. By applying the work of Skeggs to Hilton, her lifestyle is theorized as tasteless on the basis of class and gender. Skeggs explains that excessiveness "denotes low moral value" and throughout history has been associated with the working-class (*Class, Self, Culture* 99). She argues that "to read something (a body or object) as excess is to render it beyond the bounds of propriety, to locate it as inappropriate, the matter out of place, the tasteless" (*Class, Self, Culture* 100). Moreover, the "excessive sexuality" as characterized by



Hilton's sex tape and her lifestyle predating her arrest can be considered to represent what Skeggs describes as "a threat to the moral order of Western civilization" (*Class, Self, Culture* 100). Hilton's lifestyle is representative of excess as her sexual and incriminating behaviour is inappropriate, out of place, and is heightened by her class position and gender and therefore becomes indicative of tasteless acts. The content analysis demonstrates that these acts or behaviours are then compared to Hilton's style, which has been described by the media as related to the It Girl's excessive lifestyle, as tasteless.

Due to the connections taste has with class and morality, Bourdieu concludes that taste functions as a form of "symbolic violence," which helps the elites "exert their dominance in culture" (*Distinction* 511). Symbolic violence is also defined as the "power" to "appropriate" or "classify" the "classifier" in order to reaffirm the position of status quo by legitimating taste and class distinctions (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 482). These incidences of attacking Hilton's style and overall choices in lifestyle can be deemed as acts of symbolic violence that also serve to maintain the dominance of the old upper-class and express a distance from the new upper-class. Furthermore, the fact that these incidences occur in relation to sex and crime only make for an easier target and domination as surmised by Skegg's definition of excessiveness.

This leads one to ask if symbolic violence is committed, why and/or how is the It Girl still popular and able to sustain her It-ness? According to Foster and to Kendall, a rationale arises from the framing of class mobility and lifestyle in contemporary media. These scholars contend that the media's representations of class, much like gender and race, are sites of contradiction. Foster argues that "on the one hand, the consumer is

taught to work hard . . . on the other hand, the consumer is taught that, above all, he must be a hedonist, he must be wildly acquisitional” (22). Kendall expands on this by stating that the media “often not only condemn but glorify excessive spending on the part of the wealthy, in order to gain media audiences and advertising revenue” (*Framing Class* 44). As a result, the It Girl is able to transcend traditional notions of taste’s relationship to class for the sake of revenue and increase in profits for the entertainment and other consumer industries. Hence she is able to “class-pass”: her status and social identity are above any rules that formulate the construction or marking of her class (Foster 7-8). This enables It-ness to transgress traditional concepts of taste as has been expressed by Hilton’s class-coded femininity.

In her discussion of *The Simple Life*, Foster actually points to Hilton as a current example of an agent who provides “a fantasy of contact between classes” (between the elite and glamorous with the ordinary or working-class), thus permitting her to class-pass (6). Hilton is able to experience (in the case of her television show) or exhibit tastes and behaviours of the working-class in her lifestyle, as reported by the press, while sustaining her elite class and status. Therefore, these moments of downward mobility provide a fantasy of contradiction—the high and low, the good and bad, or the feminine and sexually available. This contradiction, caused by her conflicting modes of taste, enhances It-ness due to the allure of the class mobility fantasy. However, this contact with the working-class cannot be prolonged as it must remain a fantasy and be short-lived to continuously facilitate the element of unattainableness. Perhaps more significantly the It Girl’s poor taste cannot be sustained for long as her taste-making abilities (that both educate and are emulated) are dependent upon preserving her status as good taste-maker,

which in return creates profits for the consumer industry. Persistent periods of the It Girl as a bad taste-maker would impede her consumer—and cultural—value, rather than intrigue or attract audiences. Overall, the wider cultural significance of the It Girl is her ability to offer experiences of social mobility that occur as a result of the It factor's ability to temporarily transgress socially constructed boundaries of taste, class, and notions of femininity while reinforcing her ideal status position and thus legitimating the status quo.

The moments of poor taste or downward mobility as exhibited by the It Girl's lifestyle are managed overall by what Kendall describes as "emulation framing" (*Framing Class* 40-41, 231-32). This frame simultaneously establishes the distance, cultural education, and envy that enable celebrities to maintain their taste, profitability, and celebrated status. In other words, it protects or bolsters the It Girl's status as a good taste-maker when she exhibits taste or behaviour that is not traditionally condoned by the elites. Moreover, it provides false indications that class mobility is achievable through consumption when it is only dependent on lineage. According to Kendall, criminal offences by famous elite women "still emphasize that material possessions are important" and overall regard the women as having "good taste" despite their contrasting conduct (*Framing Class* 86). Kendall particularly cites Martha Stewart and Winona Ryder as prime examples: "as a wealthy woman convicted of obstruction of justice, Stewart is still seen as having good taste" (*Framing Class* 73), while Ryder is "a bad-apple-with-good-taste" (*Framing Class* 75). These women still remain icons of "good taste" and thus maintain Bourdieu's adapted notion of pure taste within an American context. For example, Stewart has regained her pre-jail popularity and has returned to television and

Ryder posed for a Marc Jacobs' 2003 advertising campaign, Jacobs being the designer of one of the bags she was prosecuted for shoplifting (K. Thomas par.8).

Similarly, since Hilton's release from prison she too has maintained her taste-making abilities, which is evident from the successful launch of her clothing line, her continuous appearances on red carpets, and as of March 2008 the expansion of her clothing line to include women's shoes. Emulation framing highlights "the differences between the rich and everyone else" through projecting "their upper-crust status and their position as 'handsome' or 'beautiful' people," while still promoting the idea that everyone deserves to reward themselves with luxurious goods (Kendall *Framing Class* 21, 231). As such, crucial statements about American class persist in these media messages: to underline class distinctions suggests the wealthy have better or superior taste in comparison to all other classes when in fact taste, according to Bourdieu, is legitimated through hegemonic processes.

The tactics that these magazines use to restore Hilton's taste and the overall It Girl status after committing "symbolic violence" (by their published judgements on her taste) are similar to the process Skeggs outlines for "tackiness" and "kitsch":

For Bourdieu, taste is always defined by those who have the symbolic power to make their judgement and definitions legitimate (the conversion of cultural into symbolic capital). This enables properties and products associated with the working-class to be taken out of context, re-signified and re-valued by those with access to symbolic power. So terms like 'tacky' and 'kitsch' name this process, whereby that which was once associated with the working-class becomes re-coded and made into an exchange-value for the middle-class. Giving objects of

this process a distinctive name, such as ‘kitsch,’ means that a knowingness is inserted into it; the classifier knows of prior negative signification and association of the object. (*Class, Self, Culture* 107)

Applying this analogy to the It Girl, as a member of the elite class, she has the ability to play with these properties of the working-class. The most obvious example is her bad clothing choices during the Porno Paris time frame, when Hilton’s sexuality transcended traditional notions of femininity by adopting blatant exotic dance attire, a style that the media, as a “symbolic power” owned by the old upper-class elites, have commonly remarketed and glamorized as “porno-chic” (McNair 61). This look was popularized by Britney Spears and has been reappropriated even further to become a buzzword, “stripperella,” recently evident on CW’s 2007 reality television shows *Pussycat Dolls Present: The Next Doll* and its 2008 *Pussycat Dolls Present: Girlicious*. Hilton’s “porno-chic” look is reported the most by *Star* within the content analysis, appearing in at least one coded article for each of the five-week time frames, in comparison to the other tabloids that ran only one or two articles in total over the five-week spans. After initially criticizing and ridiculing Hilton’s taste, all the weeklies began to re-spin her taste and encourage consumption through portraying her as “sexy” (porno-chic) and “pricey” by using spontaneous purchase narratives and sidebars of her favourite “picks” that accompanied stories on the scandal. From this example, it can be concluded that Hilton’s bad taste is quickly revalued and the It Girl’s status is reaffirmed through emulation framing.

In the Couture Convict time frame, Hilton’s imprisonment is also resignified. Instead of reprimanding her reckless behaviour, the media revalue the representation of

her impaired-driving arrest. The framing of her behaviour was derived ironically through glamorization, the glamour that essentially shielded the excessiveness of past It Girls such as Frazier and Sedgwick. This excessiveness is recoded into an exchange-value for the middle-class as it denotes a glamorous form of status. In this case, the It Girl's impaired-driving arrest is bizarrely depicted as a young Hollywood trend when Hilton's arrest (in September 2006) was closely followed by other indiscretions perpetrated by young It Girls Nicole Richie (December 2006), Lindsay Lohan (May 2007), and Mischa Barton (December 2007). Continuing with Skegg's analogy, the It Girls' impaired-driving situation is given the "distinctive" name of an elite "[Hollywood] DUI Sorority" popularized by *TMZ*. Glamorization of the It Girl's arrest is best illustrated in the June 2007 *Harper's Bazaar* editorial featuring Hilton, along with Nicole Richie, in a jewelry heist and subsequent arrest. Glamorous representations of elite setting and apparel, as earlier discussed, were juxtaposed with American stereotypes about working-class behaviour in an effort to revalue the It Girl's poor-taste-lifestyle.

Members of the old upper-elite, from an ironic position of distance, become attributed with "superior" knowledge as the only classifiers fully aware of the prior negative context associated with glamour that was used essentially to shield the masses from witnessing the totality of the It Girl's poor-taste-lifestyle. The magazines poke fun at the new upper-elites (e.g., "DUI Sorority") while still preserving the It Girl status and her image of good taste and maintaining the emulation frame in order to continue using her as a profitable commodity and cultural educator. Strallybrass and White write that "the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-

Other. . . . but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life" (5). In this situation, the It Girl operates as an educator and a model of emulation, but these transgressions demonstrate that her It Girl's status is also dependent upon her ability to incorporate the "low-Other." Thus, It-ness is comprised of both good and bad taste and these two seemingly conflicting modes are mutually dependent.

Lastly, the use of modesty is found as another tactic to restore the It Girl as legitimate, particularly in accordance with Bourdieu's sense of a pure taste-maker. This tactic directly seeks to reposition Hilton in her original high class position. Skegg argues that modesty is central "to the formation of middle-class femininity" (*Class, Self, Culture* 100). Traditional or "respectable" femininity is attained through patterns which represent Hilton as a "proper lady" and "innocent," which are identifiable characteristics of this type of femininity, as outlined in Chapter 1. During the Porno Paris time frame, Hilton is praised by the weeklies: *Star* describes Hilton's new style as the "librarian look" which signified "prim is in!" (16) and *US Weekly* and *People* view her as "demure" and lady-like ("Makeover of the Week" 94). During the Couture Convict time frame, *Life & Style* refers to Hilton's look as being "innocent" and "prim, proper, and almost angelic" and the weekly also admits that her new style was adopted to change the public's opinion of her DUI-related charges ("I'm Very Scared" 26). As expected, it was the fashion magazines that are most direct and consistent in positioning Hilton as a so-called pure taste-maker. Hilton's interview with *Harper's Bazaar* is structured around "domestic" talents that are indicative of the "conservative" manner in which she is dressed within the Couture Convict time frame (Brown 142). Similarly, *ELLE*'s interview is focused on

rationalizing Hilton's sex tape and the personal growth she gained through "learning how to dress" respectfully (Sessums 309). Overall, these tactics positioned Hilton's new style in relation to themes of modesty. In order to complete the analysis of Hilton's taste, discussion will now examine her own publication where discourses of "pure" taste and Hilton as a class-passer are openly personified.

***Paris the Heiress's Predictable Confessions: Hilton as a Dominant Form of Good and So-Called Pure Taste in Confessions of an Heiress***

*Confessions of an Heiress* portrays Hilton in a position of "superior" cultural authority due to her possession of an Americanized form of pure taste. The contents of the book are structured around Bourdieu's three capitals: economic capital, as evident in chapters such as "How to be an Heiress" and "My Day Job"; social capital in "I'm With Paris"; and cultural capital in chapters such as "Fashion and Beauty" and "My-Jet-Set Life." The structure of these chapters is built around themes of an ideal and glamorous lifestyle that were reflected in the content analysis, thus clearly supporting Bourdieu's three capitals as representative of It. Her publication acts as a "how-to book" on good taste and etiquette for gaining cultural and social capital as she occupies ideal levels of Bourdieu's capitals. Cues or tips for economic capital are limited as Hilton states that the number one "rule" of being an heiress is dependent on economic legacy (10). For readers who are not born into this "right" family, her advice is impossible: "reinvent yourself and your lineage" (10). Rather, she is offering an illusion of class mobility that she suggests may be available to everyone. However, it is her authentic economic legacy that enables Hilton to distance herself from the masses, present herself as a cultural authority, and establish her position as a lifestyle taste-maker and It Girl.



Hilton's so-called pure taste is portrayed as being linked to the fact that she is an heiress and this is a focal point of the publication because she is referred to as: "Paris the Heiress". To identify the celebutante/It Girl as royalty suggests an inherent, divine cultural value, and interest in these media figures as royalty is typically associated with divinity and elitism. This royalty narrative in the media framing of the celebutante, as evident in Hilton's publication, is the result of socialite Marie-Chantal Miller's 1995 marriage to Prince Pavlos of Greece and Denmark (Weinberg par. 5). However, it must be noted that the reemergence of the celebutante in Britain, with its monarchy, may also be a factor that impacted the present-day celebutante-as-American-royalty media narrative. In an article for *Avenue*, Jill Kargman, an author and social commentator on New York's Upper East Side society accounts for the popularization of this narrative by explaining that "people want authentic glamour and what they perceive as graceful American royalty" (qtd. Davis 74). She concludes that these socialites turned celebutantes are "quasi-royals" which is reflected by the popular reference to "heiress." Framing Hilton in this manner serves a deeper ideological purpose: to support the status quo. This is accomplished through linking her good taste to elite class and good taste to morality through the concept of divinity which facilitates the elite taste dominance.

Hilton's publication emphasizes high-class values as representative of her taste and cultural authority. Upon further analysis, it is apparent that Hilton is in fact a class-passer as her publication seeks to position Hilton as a member of the old elites by aligning her with notions of traditional femininity. Thus she exemplifies class-passing through consumerism by using elite taste values, products, and style to project an old upper-elite status when she is a member of the new upper-elites. Hilton's two most

important “instructions on being an heiress” involve being “born into the right family” and “having a great name” (10). Therefore, her good taste is the result of her class position, which encapsulates Bourdieu’s central argument on how taste and social class reinforce one another. Furthermore, it is a prime illustration of how the economic capital of an heiress is her destiny and works to legitimate her taste as good, correct, and upper-class and hence offers illusions of upward mobility. Hilton’s publication can also be interpreted as Bourdieu’s “symbolic restructuring” to restore her taste-making abilities and overall It Girl status in two ways. The first is to restore her reputation that was negatively affected by her sex tapes (restore It as good taste and high class) and the second is to mislead the American public to believe she is a member of the old elites (class-passing via consumerism). The opening pages seem to indicate this as Hilton writes that people “think everything they read about me in the tabloids is true . . . . If people read a few tidbits about you in *Vanity Fair* or on “‘Page Six’ they instantly want more” (4, 7). Clearly, Hilton is acknowledging that the press’s negative coverage that reports on her poor-taste-lifestyle has impacted her image and status. Pure taste then becomes a strategy to restore her taste-making abilities, her social class in the self-portrayal of her lifestyle, as well as an opportunity to class-pass.

Despite Hilton’s claims of not conforming to traditional femininity, in which the “prescribed way of ‘being an heiress’ that you’re supposed to conform to . . . involves wearing white gloves, big hats, and pearls . . . having some dowdy debut or a coming-out party . . . boring old-fashioned stuff like that” (5), her first illustration is arguably one that is supposed to symbolize the traditional debutante (old upper) lifestyle (3). It features Hilton in a debutante “coming-out party” gown designed by couturier Elie Saab, an

assortment of Chopard diamonds, complete with a traditional tiara while posed on a gilded French décor bed. All elements are fitting to Bourdieu's criteria for a traditional, highbrow culture (*Confessions* 268-69, 284-85). Furthermore, she exhibits other traditional or "boring" forms of highbrow culture: "My Jet-Set Life" features Hilton with the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the city where the Annual Debutante Ball is held, wearing a traditional chignon (89); she is photographed wearing pearls and a big hat in a photo collage on the back inside cover of the publication; and she is adorned with pearl accessories and a smile on two other occasions (51). Clearly, she is attempting to class-pass as a member of the old elites by portraying traditional femininity or a WASP style of elegance, purity, and modesty.

Bourdieu's notion of the continuous struggle to preserve and restore highbrow, traditional notions of lifestyle and social hierarchy is supported by the symbolic role of luxury labels and the representation of the leisure activity of shopping as represented both visually and textually in Hilton's publications. These are recurring themes which serve to promote Hilton's highbrow taste abilities and also seek to secure status quo notions of correct taste for consumer culture. The chapter on "Fashion and Beauty" (36-71) functions as Bourdieu's "accumulation of symbolic capital" and "objectified evidence of 'personal taste' . . . distinctive signs and symbols of power in the form of natural 'distinction,' personal 'authority' or 'culture'" (*Distinction* 282). Hilton writes that Yves Saint Laurent, Dior, and Christian Louboutin are among her favourite brands, especially for their shoes (57). These luxury brands are all recognized by Bourdieu as indicators of good taste and high social status (*Distinction* 284-5). Furthermore, Rocamora found that in an earlier work by Bourdieu on *haute couture* (1975), Bourdieu considers these houses

symbolic of economic capital notions of “prestige and legitimacy” (343). Bourdieu asserts that their labels transform the material’s “social characteristics” to connote of “high value” and taste that personify old wealth. Therefore, it can be argued that Hilton is using fashion as a symbolic weapon to class-pass as a member of the old upper-elites. Lastly, her publication’s photos further reflect this where “My Day Job” (Chapter 6) features Hilton in a conservative, luxury-label Chanel suit, and “The Next Chapter” (Chapter 12) displays Hilton in a Mercedes-Benz SL600, wearing a long pink Cashmore scarf. These consumer products act as “variants of the dominant taste” and reinforce Hilton’s good taste-making abilities and her ability to class-pass (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 283).

Cultural, social, and economic capitals are also evident in Hilton’s promotion of her own taste and style where she reveals some of her beauty and fashion secrets. She confesses the truth about her hair that she refers to as her “crowning glory” (44). Hilton lists every exclusive hair stylist in Beverly Hills and New York that she regularly visits and provides a recommendation for a cut, colour, or style at these salons. Despite her confessions, this list is indicative of social marking as these stylists are only available to the celebrities, which Hilton does note, as they would be too expensive for the middle- and working-classes. In addition, she provides her readers with a shopping guide and mentions her favourite places to shop: Barneys of New York, Kitson, and Tracey Ross of Los Angeles (50). These stores all have websites and enable readers to shop and look like her, which further illustrates her taste-making abilities and authority as well as her function as a commodity, even if her readers do not have the economic capital to actually travel and visit these stores in person. From Bourdieu’s perspective, it is evident that

these beauty lists and shopping guides are comparable to the notion of symbolic exchange and consumption (*Distinction* 291-93).

Finally, Bourdieu's notion of dominant and highbrow or "prestigious" leisure activities is also present in this publication which includes spa town vacations, dining, and skiing (*Distinction* 286). St. Tropez, Palm Springs, and any Four Season Spas are a necessity for Paris "because it's really fun to be pampered" (94, 172). Hilton writes that she thoroughly enjoys skiing and that one of her favourite places to ski is at the Sundance Film Festival (85). Her food preferences for expensive restaurants such as Mr. Chow and The Ivy are continuously referred to as L.A. "hot" spots in tabloid magazines and she reveals that she will only cook with "fresh, organic food" (172). Regarding her other favourite activities, her choice in nightlife is "classy" nightclubs where she can "bring her own party" (74). Not only are Hilton's lifestyle choices reflective of Bourdieu's highbrow culture, these choices also illustrate that they serve to function as a social marker as only certain people of a particular social class (like the It Girl) are able to afford and carry out this lifestyle. An old upper-elite perspective would argue that these examples signify middle-brow taste and not pure taste because they are characteristic of a *nouveau riche* lifestyle rather than of a true old elite lifestyle. Nevertheless, these examples serve to promote the idea of class mobility in the American media through consumerism, as the ability to distinguish class differences between the old and new elites requires an advanced knowledge in cultural capital or competency that many individuals do not have access to. Overall, Hilton is able to restore her position as a cultural educator and commodity through the depiction of her lifestyle, which highlights elite levels of Bourdieu's capitals by "sharing" these capital secrets with a mass audience.

The It Girl's function in consumerism is twofold, serving as a cultural educator and as a figure to be emulated, where her cultural significance is heightened by the fact that she provides illusions of class mobility by performing these roles. Despite instances of portraying poor or bad taste, as evident from her sex tape scandals and imprisonment, the It Girl is exempted from rigid categories of and links between taste and class due to her ability to class-pass. This has been argued primarily by drawing on Foster's portrayal of social mobility in American popular culture. Moreover, she is able to restore her taste-making abilities as a result of the media's emulation framing, as per Kendall. Emulation framing clearly persists, as found in the analysis's examination of fashion magazines, celebrity weeklies, and her own publication and is rationalized through an adaptation of Bourdieu's symbolic restructuring and the press's tactics of modesty and femininity that are representative of an image similar to Bourdieu's concept of pure taste. It is through Hilton's ability to maneuver between forms of high- and working-class—between forms of good and poor taste—that the It Girl offers experiences of transgression which continuously captivate the attention of the American public and point to her broader cultural significance.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the lifestyle of the celebutante in an attempt to better conceptualize It-ness and the cultural significance of the It Girl. While there are many current and historical figures who arguably conform to the definition of an It Girl, Paris Hilton offers the best case study because she is the most prominent twenty-first century celebutante. The result of this position has led to an exhaustive report of her persona and lifestyle in the American popular press since her controversial “rise” to fame in late 2003. I have argued that It-ness is the most preferable code to display in current consumer society because it has been created by the media to signify an elite and highly desirable consumer lifestyle. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work, It has been theorized as the media’s creation of an ideal attainment of economic, social, and cultural capitals that serves as a model for consumer, and more notably, for class mobility. The It Girl is not defined simply by elite class membership and good taste. Rather than being a static media icon of good taste, she has been identified as embodying contradictions in taste. She works to legitimate consumer taste through her role as a cultural educator and authority (a figure to be emulated). In doing so, she offers experiences of social mobility as the It Factor or It-ness can transgress traditional concepts of taste and class.

It should be evident that the main goal of the content analysis has been achieved as the results provide high frequencies and demonstrate a presence of patterns that support my thesis’s theoretical statements. These results reveal that the It Girl is regarded as a good taste-maker in the majority of the articles coded, but her poor taste-making abilities are also significant. Hilton’s incidences of poor taste are most evident in the reporting of her lifestyle during periods she exhibited behaviours that threatened her It

Girl status: her 2003 sex tape(s) and 2007 imprisonment. The content analyses' findings lead to an argument that extends Foster's theorization of the class-passer and provides new insights into the way the media depict the relationship between class and gender.

Despite projecting poor-taste-lifestyle that is at odds with her elite status, as demonstrated by her sex tape scandal and imprisonment, Hilton maintains her image of good taste and the It Girl status through the media's framing of her lifestyle. This framing reveals that her taste is represented in the press through binary oppositions, which validates the appropriateness of Bourdieu's homology argument. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of pure taste to signify old, American elite taste, it was found that her taste was articulated through traditional notions of femininity. The transient periods of the It Girl occupying a lowbrow taste were considered possible due to Kendall's emulation framing. This framing ensures Hilton's taste-making abilities are restored and reaffirms the It Girl status as good taste and high class. The process was analyzed through Bourdieu's use of symbolic restructuring and reappropriation of pure taste. An American notion of Bourdieu's pure taste was articulated through themes of traditional femininity and specifically the use of elegance and modesty.

Using a combined research process of interpretative and content analysis, this thesis reveals the wider cultural significance of the It Girl: the promise of social mobility through consumerism. This discussion was first facilitated by the proposal of an original working definition of the celebutante. The definition sought to support the celebutante-as-It-Girl assertion and to provide a solid context for these issues of class and taste that were not previously attached to the celebutante in academia. Being a member of the *nouveau riche*, Hilton not only provides an illusion of class-passing being attainable via



consumption (i.e., buy this product and obtain It status) but also performs as a class-passer and further reinforces this myth. The celebrity weeklies emphasized upward and downward mobility in their reporting of her lifestyle, where it was concluded that moments in good taste were idealized (promoted as being attained through consumer acts) and that poor taste transgressed stereotypical low-class associations. Her representation in the selected fashion magazines and her own publication portrayed upward mobility to reinforce her elite status as she sought to project so-called pure taste through the use of traditional femininity. Overall, it was concluded that her poor-taste-lifestyle that conflicted with elite status enhanced It-ness by providing Americans with an attractive class fantasy which in turn promotes the American Dream myth (social mobility attainable through consumption). The mobility-through-consumerism narrative legitimates the status quo in three distinct yet often overlooked ways. First, the narrative encourages the desire and consumption of elite taste and thus idealizes and reaffirms elite taste as the legitimate taste in which the old elites maintain their social position by profiting from the masses' consumption of their constructed taste. Secondly, it underlines class differences which also emphasize the rigidity of class boundaries. Finally, providing an illusion or experience of mobility through consumption emphasizes that upward mobility is performed and distances the reality of the structure of American society, wherein class is based heavily on lineage. The It Girl's ability to class-pass demonstrates the existence of a rigid social hierarchy where elite notions of It-ness are exempt from traditional social codes.

### *Limitations*

The content analysis provided valuable empirical results to establish an advanced degree of precision to the theoretical interpretation of the It Girl's broader social and cultural significance. This analysis was carefully developed over several months drawing on published research, my own previous research, and through a pilot series to ensure rigor. By measuring frequency distribution and applying the results to the development of theoretical correlations and tabulations, its main objective was achieved and proved to be a worthy tool. Due to the cultural scope of this study and my novice proficiency with the SPSS software, the use of its results may be considered a limitation. The SPSS software's ability to analyze and generate graphs provides the potential to further explore this topic with advanced statistical knowledge and training. Descriptive statistical graphs on the cross-tabulations of multi-response variables and other statistical analyses such as T-Tests may yield more areas of study that were not explored in this thesis. Given that this thesis used a combined approach—primarily driven by theory—the use of the results of the content analysis should not be regarded on the whole as a general weakness in this study. Advanced statistical training could be achieved through further graduate or postgraduate studies and research would undoubtedly be an area of interest to me.

The analysis of good and poor taste was also condensed in this study as a result of constraints in research scope. Originally these variables were formulated to code specific types of apparel that would be indicative of class and linked to variables in branding. For instance, floor-length gowns and pantsuits were developed to be representative of high taste and denim and sweatsuits were representative of poor taste. These variables were not carried out as the scope and depth of this study was at its maximum. An examination

of a categorization of apparel, in relation to taste, required more research than could be performed within this study's research design and within the scope of a Master's thesis. I would have required the adaptation of a semiotics (e.g., Roland Barthes's *The Language of Fashion*). Moreover, existing research on the significance of clothing examines its cultural meanings in relation to gender and is not extensively rooted in issues on taste or class. For example, the suit jacket's significance is expressed by Chaumette as "the symbol [of the] emancipated woman in the nineteenth century" (qtd. in Crane 104). Class-based concepts in dress are confined to discussions of French and English culture during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in which issues of production (fabric) are prevalent. Contemporary discussions of class-related concepts of dress within the research performed for this study were severely limited. Secondly, the decision to remove these variables was based on the fact that Bourdieu's luxury dictionary limits his analysis of fashion to brands (fashion brands as class specific). In all, these limitations are most certainly areas that would be considered and further developed at a Doctoral level where such research related constraints could be eliminated.

### ***Further Considerations***

As an attempt to further understand the It Girl, future research should draw comparisons between It Girls; a comparison of the theoretical and empirical analyses of Hilton found in this study to another past or present It Girl is a possible approach. Ideally, an originator should be explored, such as Bow, Frazier, or Sedgwick. However if sufficient amounts of data cannot be produced, then a more current example would also be valid. Nicky Hilton or Richie may be candidates, but as mentioned in Chapter 4 much of their reporting in the press is related to Paris Hilton and thus is not independent.

Furthermore, it has been observed that despite the similarities of the poor-taste-lifestyle between Richie and Hilton, Richie's imprisonment and out-of-wedlock pregnancy were secondary to Hilton's coverage and as of August 2007 Richie has retreated from media coverage. A more appropriate choice would be Tinsley Mortimer, a New York City celebutante, who preceded Nicky Hilton as creative designer of a Japan-based handbag brand called Samantha Thavasa. Her relationship with the Hilton sisters is limited to the handbag designer link. In fact, several months into this study, I observed an increase in media reporting on Mortimer both in fashion magazines and celebrity weeklies. Since September 2007, photographs of Mortimer have been published consistently in *Life and Style*, *Hello*, and *US Weekly* and she has been regularly featured in red carpet photos or "scene" columns in American *Vogue*, *ELLE*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. In March 2008, Mortimer received her first editorial spread in *Harper's Bazaar*. As an independent New York City celebutante, she may be an optimal counterpart to balance the West Coast celebutante.

Approaching this topic from an audience segmentation or reception perspective may also garner new insight on the It Girl. This study's findings on Hilton's highbrow and lowbrow taste suggest that Peterson's omnivore-univore argument would be an appropriate tool to examine the audience's interpretation of the It Girl. In fact, an article in the July 2008 issue of American *ELLE* examines the high-low cultural debate and relates the issue to fashion and celebrity lifestyle (Milioti 146-47). A formal analysis of Peterson's critique was not presented within Chapter 5 because of the limited scope of this study and secondly because this study's intent was to examine media framing.

There are also many areas of research on the celebutante that could be expanded and that have been overlooked in current celebrity studies. The celebutante needs to be firmly incorporated into the discipline of celebrity and media studies as an example of postmodern irony and a current site of hegemonic struggle between cultural decline and populist democracy media perspectives. Specifically, future work on the celebutante should further examine the geographically identified social class struggles between the Los Angeles and New York City social circles outlined in Chapter 2. Additional work on this issue would help strengthen and illuminate struggles in social hierarchies and elite concerns of taste. This research may lead to a more thorough understanding of luxury due to its consideration of the old elite (New York City) and the new elite (Los Angeles).

In addition, the examination of the celebutante could have been further theorized using Lasch's theory of narcissism that was briefly outlined in Chapter 2's adaptation of Boorstin's conceptualization of the celebutante. Exploring narcissism as a means of further examining the celebutante's significance would represent an entirely new angle from which to understand this celebrity phenomenon—offering a sociological or even psychological perspective. Advance in Internet technologies and the drastic change in celebrity reporting, with its newfound paparazzi dominance, has led to the “24/7” celebrity DIY news cycle. From the Internet sites TMZ.com (now turned television show), X17.com, and Hollywood.net to the increase in Internet blogging sites and wanna-be-famous pages posted on MySpace and FaceBook, the celebutante can be viewed as the product of a DIY celebrity obsessed culture. The relationship between DIY celebrity technologies and the rise and popularity of the “celebrity that is famous for being

famous” (celebutante) would be intriguing to theorize through Lasch’s work and would lead to an account of this phenomenon from a fresh, non socioeconomic perspective.

The insight on taste and gender in this study provides the potential for future areas of exploration. In particular, the analysis of traditional femininity as represented by Hilton raises interesting issues that could be used in a feminist critique of the It Girl or celebute. There are many questions that arose surrounding the role heterosexuality plays in regards to the It Girl during the last chapter: Is the conceptualization of the It Girl as in poor taste always associated with her heterosexuality? What role does heterosexuality play in the construction and maintenance of an It Girl? How can it be accounted for and measured in a study on It-ness? Can binary notions of the conception and differentiation of taste be grounded in gender as well as class? This issue of sexuality was also apparent in the preliminary media scan as Hilton appeared on five covers of men’s magazines (in *Blender*, *FHM*, *Maxim*, and *Stuff*) from May 2002 to September 2006. Furthermore, Skeggs has already performed a considerable amount of work on gender and has analyzed taste and gender through the work of Bourdieu, thus establishing a firm basis that future research could draw upon.

Lastly, future research regarding the sociology and/or examination of good taste may also consider the role and value luxury has in the representation of traditional highbrow or old upper-elite cultures. Due to the scope of this graduate thesis, my work could not historically contextualize luxury and its relationship to elite culture. This discussion would be quite insightful as luxurious lifestyles within recent years have become a trend embraced not solely by old and new upper-elites but also by the middle-classes as identified by Michman and Mazze and by D. Thomas. In the fashion industry,

much criticism has been placed on both the global brand movement and the celebrity for reappropriating luxury, according to D. Thomas, to include the elements of “middle” and “popular” taste values. With this in mind, such questions arise as: What exactly is luxury taste? What is the historic relationship between good taste and luxury? Who defines luxury taste in contemporary society—the celebrity or old elites? What impact does the celebrity have on mass consumer understanding of luxury? How or in what ways has the celebrity been able to reappropriate traditional notions of luxury in taste? The role celebrities play in the reappropriation of luxury, especially given that they are regarded as new upper-elites, needs to be examined and considered in future studies on the celebrity.

The celebutante-as-the-It Girl represents a highly contradictory cultural site that serves as a consumer model both for lifestyle and social mobility. By analyzing her taste-making abilities, it has been shown that she provides a forum through which contemporary issues and articulations in class and femininity are explored. Bourdieu’s theory on taste and class has proven to be a worthy and valuable tool in its examination of the relationship between celebrity, lifestyle, and class. The primary goals of my thesis were achieved as it has been conceptualized through the use of Bourdieu’s capitals, and the It Girl’s portrayal of conflicting tastes illuminated a considerable discourse on social mobility. The It Girl’s lifestyle revealed the existence of a biased social hierarchy within popular culture: American taste is class-based, except for such elites as the It Girl, who have the ability to transgress long established concepts of taste’s relationship to class in order to sustain the American Dream myth.

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## Appendix A: Visual Coding Sheet

143

**Title of Publication:**

Title of Article:

Date:

[illegible]

[illegible]

## Appendix B: Textual Coding Sheet

145

Title of Publication:

Title of Article:

Date:

Placement: Prime	
Placement: Feature	
Placement: Candid	
Placement: Column- Gossip	
Placement: Column- Lifestyle	
Placement: Column- Review	
Placement: Other	
Theme: Dog(s)/pet(s)	
Theme: Family	
Theme: Friendship	
Theme: Jail/legal	
Theme: Leisure Activity- Dining	
Theme: Leisure Activity- Partying	
Theme: Leisure Activity- Shopping/fashion	
Theme: Leisure Activity- Vacationing	
Theme: Philanthropy	
Theme: Romance	
Theme: Trend	
Theme: Sex	
Theme: Other	
Promotional: Current media project (work)	
Promotional: Hilton-produced placement	
Promotional: Non-Hilton-produced placement	
Promotional: Paris placement	
Promotional: Other	
Dress Ratings: Best dressed/trendsetter	
Dress Ratings: Worst dressed/fashion victim	
Dress Ratings: Not applicable	
Dress Ratings: Other	
Evidence of cost: High cost- Expensive	
Evidence of cost: High cost- Exclusive	
Evidence of cost: Low cost- Inexpensive	
Evidence of cost: Low cost- Non-exclusive	
Evidence of cost: Not applicable	
Evidence of cost: Other	

## Appendix C: Codebook — Visual and Textual Analysis

### Visual

#### *Setting — Examines the Location of the Photograph*

Attendance at Private Hollywood-Home Party: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) a Hollywood residence for a private party.

Beauty: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) a beauty salon or spa.

Café Outing: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) a café (i.e. tea or coffee bar).

Dining: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) a restaurant or captures her while she is dining.

Driving/Car: Photograph features Paris driving or inside/exiting/entering a car.

Hotel: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) or inside a hotel.

Legal: Photograph features Paris in a legal related environment: being photographed at a court house or in police custody.

Media Still: Production studio photograph or media still of Paris (e.g., *The Simple Life* promotional photo, still from an episode, still from a guest appearance on a television program or still from a film).

Nightclubbing: Photograph features Paris at or in front of (entering or exiting) a nightclub.

Pool/Beach: Photograph features Paris lounging at or in a pool or at a beach.

Red Carpet Premiere — Involved: Photograph features Paris at a media-related premiere event on the red carpet (screening, party, etc.) for a project that she is directly involved with (e.g., *The Simple Life*).

Red Carpet Premiere — Not involved: Photograph features Paris at a media-related premiere event on the red carpet (screening, party, etc.) for a project that she is not involved with (e.g., screening of a television program or film in which she does not appear).

Shopping: Photograph features Paris shopping inside or entering/exiting a store (e.g., boutique, department store, etc.).



Unidentifiable: Location of the photograph cannot be determined.

Other: Location of photograph is in a setting that has not been identified or defined as a value.

***Posing With — Identifies the Individuals in the Photograph with Paris***

Posing Alone: Photograph features Paris posing alone for the camera.

Posing with Other Celebrity(ies) Photograph features Paris posing with other entertainment or sporting celebrity(ies).

Posing with Other Celebutante(s) Photograph features Paris posing with another celebutante(s): Nicole Richie, Kimberly Stewart, Kim Kardashian, etc.

Posing with Her Dog(s): Photograph features the celebutante posing with any of her dogs.

Posing with Her Family: Photograph features Paris and her family.

Father: Photograph features Paris with her father.

Mother and Sister: Photograph features Paris with her mother and sister.

Mother : Photograph features Paris with her mother.

Parents: Photograph features Paris with her father and mother.

Sister: Photograph features Paris with her sister.

Other: Photograph features another family combination that has not been identified (i.e., Paris posing with her entire family, grandparents, brothers, father and brothers, her aunt, etc.).

Posing with Sister and Other Celebutante(s) Photograph features Paris and her sister posing with another celebutante(s). Examples include: Nicole Richie, Kimberly Stewart, or Kim Kardashian, etc.

Posing with Romantically Linked Male: Photograph features Paris and a past, present, or rumoured romantic partner.

Other: Photograph features Paris and other individual(s) that has/have not been identified or defined as a value.

***Media Construction — Indicates the Media's Visibility in the Photograph***

Fans: Indicates Paris interacting with fans or the presence of fans in the photograph's background.

Industry Personnel: Indicates the presence of the industry personnel other than the paparazzi in the photograph as identified by those wearing press passes and not holding a camera.

Paparazzi: Indicates the presence of the paparazzi in the photograph.

Paparazzi and Fans: Indicates the presence of both the paparazzi and the fans in the photograph.

None/Not Applicable: Indicates that no media presence is visible in the photograph.

Other: Photograph features Paris and another media outlet that has not been identified or defined as a value.

***Accessories — Examines the Handbags, Shoes, and Pets Featured in Photographs of Paris***

Handbag: Examines the handbag worn by Paris in the photograph.

Present: Indicates that Paris is wearing a handbag and it is visible in the frame.

Not Present: Indicates that either Paris is not wearing a handbag or it is not visible in the frame.

Pet: Examines the pet featured with Paris in the photograph.

Tinkerbell: Indicates that Tinkerbell is photographed with Paris.

Paris's Other Dogs: Indicates that another dog(s) is photographed with Paris.

None: Indicates that no pet is photographed with Paris.

Other: Indicates that another pet or animal, other than a dog is photographed with Paris.

Shoes: Examines the shoes worn by Paris in the photograph.

Present: Indicates that Paris is wearing shoes that are visible in the frame.

Not Present: Indicates that either Paris is not wearing shoes or they are not visible in the frame.

Other: Photograph features a brand category that has not been identified as a value.

***Brand — Indicates the Brands (Apparel, Handbag, Shoes) that Paris is Photographed Wearing***

Apparel: Examines the brand of clothing worn by Paris in the photograph.

Designer Logo Visible: Indicates that Paris is visibly wearing a designer brand.

Designer Logo Implicit on Knowledge of Cultural Codes: Indicates that Paris is wearing a designer label, but since the design house does not place a logo on the outside of the clothing, recognition of the brand is dependent on contemporary knowledge of haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion codes (e.g., Chanel's Bouclé jackets, Pucci's signature prints, 2BFree's Fleur, etc.).

Hilton-Designed Clothing: Indicates Paris is wearing a Hilton-designed (by either Paris or sister Nicky) article of clothing.

Text Identification: Indicates that the brand of the clothes Paris is wearing cannot visually be identified by the coder, but is identified in the photo text.

Unidentifiable: Indicates that the brand of the clothes Paris is wearing cannot be identified by the coder.

Handbag: Examines the brand of the handbag worn by Paris in the photograph.

Designer Logo Visible: Indicates that Paris is visibly wearing a designer handbag.

Designer Logo Implicit on Knowledge of Cultural Codes: Indicates that Paris is wearing a designer handbag, but since the design house does not place a logo on the outside of the bag, recognition of the brand is dependent on contemporary knowledge of haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion codes (e.g., Hermes's Kelly Bag, Balenciaga's Motorcycle Bag, etc.).

Hilton-Designed Bag: Indicates Paris is wearing a Hilton-designed (by either Paris or sister Nicky) handbag.

Text Identification: Indicates that the brand of handbag Paris is wearing cannot visually be identified by the coder, but is identified in the photo text.

Unidentifiable: Indicates that the brand of the handbag Paris is wearing cannot be identified by the coder.

Shoes: Examines the brand of the shoes worn by Paris in the photograph.

Designer Logo Visible: Indicates that Paris is wearing a designer pair of shoes as the logo is visible on the shoes in the photograph.

Designer Logo Implicit on Knowledge of Cultural Codes: Indicates that Paris is wearing a designer pair of shoes, but since the design house does not place a logo on the outside of any shoe, recognition of the designer is dependent on contemporary knowledge of haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion codes (e.g., Christian Louboutin's red soles, Roger Vivier's silver buckle, etc.).

Text Identification: Indicates that the brand of shoes Paris is wearing cannot visually be identified by the coder, but is identified in the photo text.

Unidentifiable: Indicates that the brand of shoes Paris is wearing cannot be identified by the coder.

Other: Photograph features a brand category that has not been identified as a value.

## **Textual**

### ***Placement — Examines the Placement of the Article Within the Publication***

Prime: Identified as an article featured on the front cover of the magazine.

Feature: Identified as an article listed in the magazine's table of contents.

Candid: Identified as an article featured in the weekly "candid" celebrity shots appearing immediately before or after the magazine's table of contents.

Column: Identified as an article appearing in one of the magazine's weekly columns as listed in the table of contents.

Gossip: Identified as a rumour column (e.g., upcoming projects, relationships, and friendship or feuds).

Lifestyle: Identified as a lifestyle and product placement column (e.g., fashion trends, fashion dos and don'ts, weekly "hot lists," gift guides).

Review: Identified as a critical review of Paris's television show, or her appearance on television or film.

Other: Identified as an article that does not meet any of the established placement criteria.

***Theme — Examines the Main Theme of the Article***

Dog(s)/Pets: Major emphasis given to Paris's dog(s) or her pets in general. Her most famous dog is Tinkerbelle; however, article will be coded if one or all dogs are portrayed as the main theme.

Family: Major emphasis on Paris' family includes articles on: the value and/or status of the family name; on the immediate family's closeness; insight on how she was raised, relationship with parents, siblings, or other family members (grandparents, cousins, aunts, etc.).

Friendship: Major emphasis on Paris's friendship(s) with other celebrity(ies). Article can focus on the strength of the friendship or on a feud.

Jail/Legal: Major emphasis on Paris's legal issues that are related to her January 2007 impaired driving arrest and license suspension (e.g., arrest, hearing, etc.) or on her May 2007 imprisonment.

Leisure Activity: Major emphasis on Paris's lifestyle as accounted by the paparazzi or reporter in a feature article and not a column.

Dining: Identified as an article that comments on Paris's dining experiences: where she was spotted eating, what she ate, who she was with, or what her favourite restaurants are.

Partying: Identified as an article that comments on Paris' partying experiences: details on where she parties (e.g., nightclub, Hollywood home, industry party, etc.), what she ate, who she was with or what her favourite nightspots are.

Shopping/Fashion: Identified as an article that comments on Paris's shopping experiences: details on where she was spotted shopping, what she bought, who she was shopping with, what her favourite shops are, or examines her interest and enthusiasm for fashion.

Vacationing: Identified as an article that comments on Paris's vacationing experiences: details on where she vacations, which hotel she was spotted at, who she was with, or her favourite vacationing destinations/hotels.

Philanthropy: Major emphasis given to Paris's involvement in philanthropic activities (e.g., participation at charity events, attendance at charity balls, etc.).

Romance: Major emphasis on the status of Paris's intimate relationship(s). Article can focus on either a current, past, or rumoured relationship.

**Trend:** Major emphasis on a lifestyle trend, wherein a magazine column identifies Paris as wearing the trend, owning the trendy item, or being seen at the trendy location.

**Sex:** Major emphasis on Paris's sex life (e.g., sex tape scandals).

**Other:** Identified as an article that does not meet any of the established main theme criteria.

***Promotional — Major Emphasis Given to Product Placement. Includes Paris's Brands and/or Projects, Hilton-Produced Projects/Brands, and Other Aspects of Consumer/Product Placement (e.g. Unrelated Hilton Products, Brands, and Establishments).***

**Current Media Project (Work):** Identified as an article that highlights one of Paris's current media projects.

**Hilton-Produced Placement:** Identified as an article that highlights a consumer good or media project that does not involve Paris directly; instead it is directly associated with another Hilton family member or the family name (e.g., Nicky Hilton's (sister) handbags, Kathy Hilton's (mother) reality show).

**Non-Hilton-Produced Placement:** Identified as an article that highlights a consumer good or media project that Paris is not involved with, but one that she nevertheless enjoys using or frequents or is associated with.

**Paris Brand/Product(s) Placement:** Identified as an article that highlights one of Paris's brand and/product(s).

**Other:** Identified as a promotional placement that has not been identified or defined as a value.

***Dress Ratings — Examines Paris's Dress/Style as Determined by a Rating or Panel of Fashion Experts***

**Best Dressed/Trendsetter:** Identifies Paris specifically as "best dressed" or as a "trendsetter." Limited to: direct comments ("best dressed" or "trendsetter"), Paris appearing on a *Best Dressed List*, Paris being featured as the lead in an article about the latest styles or trends, Paris being identified as a fashion "do," or Paris receiving a "best" style award or title from a magazine.

**Worst Dressed/Fashion Victim:** Identifies Paris specifically as "worst dressed" or as a "fashion victim." Limited to: Paris appearing on a *Worst Dressed List*, Paris being featured as the lead on an article about latest styles and trends not to wear, Paris being identified as a fashion "don't," or Paris receiving a "worst" style award or title from a magazine.

**Not Applicable:** Identified as an article that does not rate or rank Paris's dress.

Other: Identified as an article that does not meet any of the established dress ratings criteria.

***Evidence of Cost- Article that Indicates the Social or Economic Value of an Consumer Item(s) that is Worn or Associated with Paris***

High Cost — Expensive: Identified as an article that commented on the high cost of any item (apparel, shoes, handbag) that Paris owns, was photographed wearing, or photographed buying. The text explicitly lists the cost of the items or refers to the item(s) as “expensive,” “pricey,” “costly,” or “luxurious” (luxury).

High Cost — Exclusive: Identified as an article that commented on the exclusivity of a material item that Paris was wearing or owns. It refers to the item’s limited availability, and/or how the item was customized for Paris, and/or it may discuss how the celebutante was selectively chosen to receive the customized or limited item(s).

Low Cost — Inexpensive: Identified as an article that commented on the low cost of any item (apparel, shoes, handbag) that Paris owns, was photographed wearing, or photographed buying. The text explicitly lists the cost of the item or refers to the item(s) as “inexpensive,” “cheap,” or “affordable”.

Low Cost — Non-Exclusive: Identified as an article that commented on the non-exclusivity of a material item that Paris was wearing or owns. It refers to mass-produced items that the masses may easily obtain.

Not Applicable: Identified as an article that does not refer to the cost or availability of consumer item(s) owned or worn by Paris.

Other: Identified as an article that does not meet any of the established cost-related criteria.

<i>People</i>	Paris Under Siege	1-Dec-03 pp. 66-7	Feature	<b>1st Sex Tape</b>
<i>People</i>	People.Com: Checking into the Hilton	8-Dec-03 p. 8	Column: Viewer	
<i>People</i>	The Simple Life	8-Dec-03 p. 42	Review	
<i>People</i>	Style Watch: Shirt The Issue	8-Dec-03 p. 190	Column: lifestyle- fashion	
<i>People</i>	Girls Gone Hog Wild	15-Dec-03 pp. 66-8	Cover	
<i>People</i>	Style Watch: Makeover of the Week: Paris Hilton	22-Dec-03 p. 94	Column: lifestyle- fashion	
<i>People</i>	Best of 08: Best Trap for City Mice	29-Dec-03 p. 108	Cover	
<i>Star</i>	The Real Simple Life of Paris & Nicole	2-Dec-03 p. 21	Feature	
<i>Star</i>	Paris Hilton's Sex Tape Drama!	2-Dec-03 pp. 38-41	Cover	
<i>Star</i>	The Simple Life	2-Dec-03 p. 40	Review	
<i>Star</i>	Are Paris' Parents To Blame?	10-Dec-03 p. 21	Cover	<b>2nd Sex Tape</b>
<i>Star</i>	Hollywood's Biggest Spenders!...Paris'...Purse Purchases	16-Dec-03 pp. 36-7	Feature: lifestyle	
<i>Star</i>	The Secrets Behind The Simple Life	16-Dec-03 p. 42	Feature	
<i>Star</i>	Confidential: The Buzz....: Paris' New Boyfriend Scores!	16-Dec-03 p. 62	Column: gossip	
<i>Star</i>	Star Shots- Sisters, Sisters	23-Dec-03 pp. 6-7	Column: weekly candids	
<i>Star</i>	Paris Hilton Answers Back: I've Changed My Life	23-Dec-03 pp. 46-7, 52	Cover	
<i>Star</i>	Star Holiday Gift Guide!: Spoil Me	23-Dec-03 p. 68	Feature: lifestyle- gift guide	
<i>Star</i>	Star Shots: Billboard Blowout!	30-Dec-03 pp. 1-2	Column: weekly candids	
<i>Star</i>	Star Shots: Family Outing	30-Dec-03 pp. 7-8	Column: candids- lifestyle	
<i>Star</i>	Star...Celebrity....: The New Librarian Look? Prim Is In	30-Dec-03 p. 16	Column: gossip- fashion	
<i>Star</i>	Stars Who Are Normal....: Normal- Paris Rents A Video	30-Dec-03 p. 51	Column: weekly candids	
<i>Star</i>	Arkansas Still Reeling From Hurricane Hilton	30-Dec-03 p. 58	Feature	
<i>US Weekly</i>	Paris Hilton: Victim or Vixen?	01-08-Dec-03 pp. 56-8, 60-2	Cover	
<i>US Weekly</i>	The Simple Life	01-08-Dec-03 p. 100	Review	
<i>US Weekly</i>	Faces & Places: Chihuahua Mamas!	15-Dec-03 p. 24	Column: weekly candids	
<i>US Weekly</i>	Simple Life Secrets	15-Dec-03 pp. 72-3	Feature	
<i>US Weekly</i>	Where is Paris?	15-Dec-03 p. 73	Feature	
<i>People</i>	Prada Store Opening	2-Aug-04 p. 16	Column: candids- lifestyle	
<i>People</i>	Style Watch: Just Add Watercolor	2-Aug-04 p. 101	Column: lifestyle- fashion	
<i>People</i>	Scoop: Nick Speaks Why Paris and I Spilt	9-Aug-04 p. 19	Column: gossip	
<i>People</i>	Trouble for Paris	16-Aug-04 pp. 64-5	Cover	
<i>People</i>	Paris & Nick: Life Goes On	16-Aug-04 p. 65	Cover	
<i>People</i>	Paris's Wild Week	23-Aug-04 pp. 58-9	Feature: lifestyle	
<i>People</i>	Tinkerbell: Where Are You	30-Aug-04 p. 28	Column: gossip	
<i>Star</i>	It's A Girl's World	2-Aug-04 p. 2	Column: weekly candids	
<i>Star</i>	Star People- Rumor....: Are Paris & Nicole Breaking Up?	2-Aug-04 p. 27	Column: gossip	



Star	Stars Who Are...: Not Normal- Paris' Hair	2-Aug-04 pp. 34-5	Column: weekly candid
Star	Star People: Celebrity Scoop...: Prada Party People	2-Aug-04 p. 40	Column: candid- lifestyle
Star	Star People: Celebrity Scoop...Paris Pressures Nick	2-Aug-04 p. 40	Column: candid- lifestyle
Star	Hollywood's Best Boobs & Butts...: Paris Hilton	2-Aug-04 pp. 46-9	Cover
Star	Star Style: Paris & Nicole's Simple Life Style!	2-Aug-04 pp. 76-77	Column: lifestyle- fashion
Star	Star Trend: Hot Hilton Bags!	9-Aug-04 p. 32	Feature
Star	Star Shots: Photos of the Week	9-Aug-04 p. 2	Column: weekly candid
Star	Star People: The Truth About the Break-Up	9-Aug-04 p. 27	Column: gossip
Star	Stars Who Are Normal...: Normal- Paris...Hot Dog	16-Aug-04 pp. 31-2	Column: weekly candid
Star	Was Paris Battered?	16-Aug-04 pp. 44-7	Cover
Star	Preview: The 2004 Teen Choice Awards	16-Aug-04 p. 70	Review
Star	Star Beauty: The Price is Right!	16-Aug-04 pp. 84-5	Column: lifestyle- beauty
Star	Star Shots: Queens of the Teen Scene	23-Aug-04 pp. 2-3	Column: weekly candid
Star	Star Shots: Princesses & Reality Royalty	23-Aug-04 pp. 4-5	Column: weekly candid
Star	Star News: Battle of the Blonde Book Authors	23-Aug-04 p. 21	Column: gossip
Star	Stars Who Are...Normal- Paris Picks Up the Mail	23-Aug-04 pp. 36-7	Column: weekly candid
Star	Star People: Stars Phone Home	23-Aug-04 p. 40	Column: lifestyle
Star	Victoria Gotti's Secrets: Paris's Wild Ways	23-Aug-04 pp. 44-7	Column: gossip
Star	Paris Hilton's New Sex Scandal?	23-Aug-04 pp. 56-7	Cover
Star	Star Style & Error	23-Aug-04 pp. 94-5	Column: lifestyle- fashion
Star	Star News: Haylie to Paris: Get Your Hands...Meow!	30-Aug-04 p. 20	Column: gossip
Star	Couple News: Paris on the Rebound: 3 Days! 3 Guys!	30-Aug-04 p. 26	Column: gossip
Star	Star People: Crisis! Tinkerbell is Lost!	30-Aug-04 p. 38	Column: gossip
Star	Stars Crazy Meltdowns: Paris Hilton & Nick Cater	30-Aug-04 p. 49	Cover
Star	Star Style: Stars Live in Lingerie!	30-Aug-04 pp. 76-77	Column: lifestyle- fashion
Star	Star Style & Error	30-Aug-04 pp. 94-5	Column: lifestyle- fashion
US Weekly	The Red Carpet: Pretty in Prada	2-Aug-04 pp. 10-1	Column: lifestyle- fashion
US Weekly	Bag Ladies	2-Aug-04 pp. 16-19	Feature: fashion
US Weekly	Faces & Places: Gone with the Wind!	2-Aug-04 p. 22	Column: weekly candid
US Weekly	Faces & Places: Bad Time to Talk?	9-Aug-04 p. 34	Column: weekly candid
US Weekly	Paris Hilton: Why I Split With Nick	9-Aug-04 pp. 54-5	Cover
US Weekly	Jessica vs. Paris: Battle of the Blondes!	9-Aug-04 pp. 68-9	Feature
US Weekly	Trend Alert: Yachts- They're Hot!	9-Aug-04 pp. 72-3	Feature: lifestyle
US Weekly	Star Style: Easy, Breezy Summer Style	9-Aug-04 pp. 82-3	Column: lifestyle- fashion
US Weekly	The Simple Life 2	9-Aug-04 p. 91	Review
US Weekly	Faces & Places: Stars- They're Just Like US	16-Aug-04 p. 22	Column: lifestyle
US Weekly	Hot Stuff: Did Nick Beat Paris?	16-Aug-04 pp. 40-1	Column: gossip
US Weekly	Fashion Police Extra!: Dress déjà vu!	16-Aug-04 p. 92	Column: fashion- don't

<i>US Weekly</i>	The Red Carpet: Blue Attitude	23-Aug-04 pp. 12-3	Column: lifestyle- fashion
<i>US Weekly</i>	Faces & Places: Hollywood's Teen Scene	23-Aug-04 p. 33	Column: weekly candid
<i>US Weekly</i>	Faces & Places: Pocket-size Pets	23-Aug-04 p. 42	Column: lifestyle
<i>US Weekly</i>	Paris: I'm Back With My Old Fiance	23-Aug-04 pp. 64-5	Cover
<i>US Weekly</i>	What's in Their Shopping Bags	23-Aug-04 pp. 76-7	Feature: fashion
<i>US Weekly</i>	The Red Carpet: Drop-Waisted Divas	30-Aug-04 pp. 2-3	Column: lifestyle- fashion
<i>US Weekly</i>	Faces & Places: Paris Goes to Camp!	30-Aug-04 p. 18	Column: lifestyle
<i>US Weekly</i>	Nicky Hilton's Surprise Wedding	30-Aug-04 pp. 40-1	Feature
<i>US Weekly</i>	Is Paris Dating Durst?	30-Aug-04 p. 41	Feature
<i>US Weekly</i>	Hot Spots: Miami: MTV Invades South Beach	30-Aug-04 pp. 72-3	Feature: lifestyle
<i>US Weekly</i>	Star Style: Summer Sequins at Every Price	30-Aug-04 pp. 78-9	Column: lifestyle- fashion
<i>Vogue</i>	American Beauties	1-Feb-00 pp. 264-71, 305	Feature
<i>Vanity Fair</i>	Hip-Hop Debs	1-Sep-00 pp. 350-56, 378-9	Cover
<i>Elle</i>	The Not-So-Simple Life	Mar-04 pp. 296-309	Cover
<i>Vanity Fair</i>	The Inescapable Paris	Oct-05 pp. 280-89, 343	Cover
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris is Scared for Her Life	21-May-07 pp. 40-2	Cover
<i>In Touch</i>	Goodby Tiara, Hello Handcuffs	21-May-07 p. 43	Cover
<i>In Touch</i>	They Made Their Moms Famous: Kathy...just like Paris	21-May-07 p. 72	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris Prepares for Prison: Prayers...Workouts	28-May-07 pp. 60-1	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Style Showdown: Who Wore It Better?	4-Jun-07 pp. 8-9	Column: fashion
<i>In Touch</i>	In The Know: Stars Weigh in on Paris	4-Jun-07 p. 46	Column: gossip- lifestyle
<i>In Touch</i>	In The Know: Paris' Secret Weapon	4-Jun-07 p. 46	Column: gossip- lifestyle
<i>In Touch</i>	Does Lindsay Face the Same Fate as Paris?	11-Jun-07 p. 43	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris is Model Prisoner	18-Jun-07 pp. 54-7	Cover
<i>In Touch</i>	Her Last Hours of Freedom	18-Jun-07 p. 55	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris' Pre-Jail Makeover	18-Jun-07 p. 56	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Do Stripes Make Me Look Fat?	18-Jun-07 p. 57	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Another New Guy for Paris	18-Jun-07 p. 57	Gossip
<i>In Touch</i>	Inside Paris' Prison Hell	25-Jun-07 pp. 42-44	Cover
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris Keeps Up Her Spirits	2-Jul-07 p. 43	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris is Free Again	9-Jul-07 pp. 56-7	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	What She Missed From Her Old Life	9-Jul-07 p. 57	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris' First Days of Freedom	16-Jul-07 pp. 56-7	Feature
<i>In Touch</i>	Is It True?- Did Paris' Empty Can...\$300 on eBay?	23-Jul-07 p. 32	Gossip
<i>In Touch</i>	Paris' New Career	23-Jul-07 p. 50	Gossip
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Style Week: 7 Trends in 7 Days!	21-May-07 pp. 8-9	Gossip: fashion
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris Tells Life & Style: 'I'm Very Scared'	21-May-07 pp. 26-9	Cover
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	New Look For Paris: Her Style says, 'I'm Innocent'	21-May-07 p. 26	Feature

Court Case/Imprisonment

<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	In Stores Now	21-May-07 pp. 52-3	Feature: fashion
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Diva or...: Paris' Bag is Personalized	21-May-07 p. 70	Column: candid- lifestyle
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Who Wears It Best?	21-May-07 pp. 80-1	Column: fashion
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris Gets Ready For Jail!	28-May-07 pp. 32-3	Feature
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Diva or...: Down-to-Earth: Paris Checks Directions!	28-May-07 pp. 64-5	Column: candid- lifestyle
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	New Pics- Staying Strong: Paris...High Road	4-Jun-07 p. 19	Column: candid- lifestyle
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Diva or...: Paris Shops For Art Supplies	4-Jun-07 p. 68	Column: candid- lifestyle
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Lifestyle- Self-Help: How Paris Is Finding Peace	11-Jun-07 p. 72	Column: lifestyle
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris Goes To Jail!	18-Jun-07 pp. 34-5	Cover
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris' Mystery Illness Revealed!	25-Jun-07 pp. 30-33	Cover
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Scoops- Paris: Father's Day Reunion	2-Jul-07 p. 28	Gossip
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris Free At Last!	9-Jul-07 pp. 32-3	Cover
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris Defends Herself: 'I'm A Good Person'	16-Jul-07 pp. 36-7	Feature
<i>Life &amp; Style</i>	Paris' 'I'm Free' Shopping Spree	23-Jul-07 pp. 44-5	Feature: lifestyle
<i>People</i>	Paris' New Cell	21-May-07 pp. 62-5	Cover
<i>People</i>	Scoop: Jail Break?	28-May-07 p. 24	Column: gossip
<i>People</i>	Scoop: Paris Hilton: Behind Bars	18-Jun-07 p. 19	Column: gossip
<i>People</i>	Book Her!	18-Jun-07 p. 19	Column: lifestyle
<i>People</i>	Paris Hilton: Law & Disorder	25-Jun-07 pp. 64-7	Cover
<i>People</i>	Paris Watch	2-Jul-07 p. 49	Column: gossip
<i>People</i>	Inside People	8-Jul-07 p. 8	Editor's Note
<i>People</i>	'I'm A Good Person'	8-Jul-07 pp. 58-64	Cover
<i>People</i>	Star Tracks: Paris' Post-Jail Getaway	16-Jul-07 p. 16	Column: candid- lifestyle
<i>Star</i>	Paris' Prison Nightmare	21-May-07 pp. 54-7	Cover
<i>Star</i>	Paris' Pre-Jail Workout!	28-May-07 p. 8	Gossip: weekly candid
<i>Star</i>	Paris Preps For The Pokey!	11-Jun-07 p. 40	Feature
<i>Star</i>	Hard Time = Hard Cash!	18-Jun-07 p. 45	Feature
<i>Star</i>	Paris Suicidal In Prisoner	25-Jun-07 pp. 44-5	Cover
<i>Star</i>	Just Asking: Was Paris' Car Repossessed?	2-Jul-07 p. 32	Gossip: lifestyle
<i>Star</i>	Just Asking: Is Paris Turning Jail Time Into A Movie?	9-Jul-07 p. 34	Gossip: lifestyle
<i>Star</i>	Nicky vs. Paris: Sister Feud?	23-Jul-07 p. 29	Feature
<i>US Weekly</i>	Courtroom Drama: 'I Don't Deserve This'	21-May-07 pp. 62-5	Cover
<i>US Weekly</i>	The Record: Candy & Paris: It's On!	28-May-07 p. 39	Column: gossip
<i>US Weekly</i>	Fashion Police Extra!: Paris's Prison Stripe Style	28-May-07 p. 92	Column: fashion- don't
<i>US Weekly</i>	Red Carpet: Who Wore It Best?	8-Jun-07 p. 8	Column: lifestyle- fashion
<i>US Weekly</i>	Hot Hollywood- Paris's Pre-Jail Checklist	11-Jun-07 p. 16	Column: lifestyle
<i>US Weekly</i>	Hot Stuff: Paris Hilton Her First Day in Jail	18-Jun-07 p. 57	Column: gossip
<i>US Weekly</i>	The Complete Bad Girls Guide	18-Jun-07 pp. 72-7	Feature

*US Weekly*  
*US Weekly*  
*US Weekly*  
*US Weekly*  
*Harper's Bazaar*

Burning Paris Questions!  
'I Used to Act Dumb'  
Red Carpet: Who Wore It Best?  
US Plays...:Paris Hilton...Spiritual Epiphany- In Jail  
Partners in Crime

25-Jun-07 pp. 56-9  
25-Jun-07 p. 57  
2-Jul-07 p. 6  
2-Jul-07 pp. 68-9  
Jun-07 pp. 134-49

Feature  
Feature  
Column: fashion  
Feature  
Cover

### Appendix E: Frequency Results for Visual Content Analysis

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	elle	12	3.5	3.5	3.5
	harper's bazaar	9	2.6	2.6	6.1
	in touch	47	13.7	13.7	19.8
	life and style	42	12.2	12.2	32.1
	people	60	17.5	17.5	49.6
	star	92	26.8	26.8	76.4
	us weekly	69	20.1	20.1	96.5
	vanity fair	10	2.9	2.9	99.4
	vogue	2	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 1. Number of Photographs of Hilton per Publication.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	alone	188	54.8	54.8	54.8
	celebrity(s)	12	3.5	3.5	58.3
	celebutante(s)	35	10.2	10.2	68.5
	dog(s)	17	5.0	5.0	73.5
	family – father	4	1.2	1.2	74.6
	family - mother and sister	3	.9	.9	75.5
	family – mother	13	3.8	3.8	79.3
	family – parents	2	.6	.6	79.9
	family – sister	16	4.7	4.7	84.5
	sister and other celebutante(s)	3	.9	.9	85.4
	family – other	5	1.5	1.5	87.5
	romantically linked male	28	8.1	8.1	92.7
	Other	17	4.9	4.9	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 2. Hilton Posing With.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	attendance at private hollywood home party	4	1.2	1.2	27.1
	beauty	2	.6	.6	27.7
	café outing	13	3.8	3.8	31.5
	dining	12	3.5	3.5	35.0
	driving/car	23	6.7	6.7	41.7
	Hotel	15	4.4	4.4	46.1
	Legal	29	8.5	8.5	54.5
	media still	35	10.2	10.2	64.7
	Nightclubbing	18	5.2	5.2	70.0
	pool/beach	8	2.3	2.3	72.3
	red carpet - involved	41	12.0	12.0	12.0
	red carpet - not involved	48	14.0	14.0	25.9
	cannot identify	47	13.7	13.7	100.0
	other	0	0	0	0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 3.0. Settings.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fans	12	3.5	3.5	3.5
	industry personnel	15	4.4	4.4	7.9
	Paparazzi	28	8.2	8.2	16.0
	paparazzi and fans	12	3.5	3.5	19.5
	none/not applicable	273	79.6	79.6	99.1
	Other	3	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4. Media Construction.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	designer logo visible	43	12.5	12.5	12.5
	designer logo implicit on codes	100	29.2	29.2	41.7
	hilton designed clothing	11	3.2	3.2	44.9
	text identification	60	17.5	17.5	62.4
	NA	129	37.6	37.6	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 5. Brand — Apparel.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid not present	241	70.3	70.3	70.3
Present	102	29.7	29.7	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 6. Accessories — Shoes.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid none	241	70.3	70.3	70.3
designer logo visible	12	3.5	3.5	73.8
designer logo implicit on codes	27	7.9	7.9	81.6
text identification	9	2.6	2.6	84.3
NA	43	12.5	12.5	96.8
5.00	11	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 7. Brand — Shoes.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid not present	210	61.2	61.2	61.2
present	133	38.8	38.8	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 8. Accessories — Handbag.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid none	210	61.2	61.2	61.2
designer logo visible	43	12.5	12.5	73.8
designer logo implicit on codes	66	19.2	19.2	93.0
hilton designed bag	11	3.2	3.2	96.2
text identification	7	2.0	2.0	98.3
NA	6	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 9. Brand — Handbags.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	none	307	89.5	89.5	89.5
	Tinkerbell	19	5.5	5.5	95.0
	Paris's other dogs	3	.9	.9	95.9
	other animals	14	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 10. Accessories — Pets.



### Appendix F: Frequency Results for Textual Content Analysis

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	prime	36	23.2	23.2	23.2
	feature	35	22.6	22.6	45.8
	candid	15	9.7	9.7	55.5
	gossip	28	18.1	18.1	73.5
	lifestyle	35	22.6	22.6	96.1
	review	6	3.9	3.9	100.0
	other	0	0	0	
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 11. Placement of Hilton articles per Publication.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	131	84.5	84.5	84.5
	Yes	24	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig.12.0 Theme — Dogs/Pets.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	104	67.1	67.1	67.1
	Yes	51	32.9	32.9	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 13. Theme- Family.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	145	93.5	93.5	93.5
	yes	10	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 14. Theme — Friendship.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	106	68.4	68.4	68.4
	yes	49	31.6	31.6	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 15. Theme — Jail/Legal.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	137	88.4	88.4	88.4
yes	18	11.6	11.6	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig.16. Theme — Leisure Activity — Dining.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	124	80.0	80.0	80.0
yes	31	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 17. Theme — Leisure Activity — Partying.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	95	61.3	61.3	61.3
yes	60	38.7	38.7	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 18. Theme— Leisure Activity — Shopping.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	144	92.9	92.9	92.9
yes	11	7.1	7.1	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 19. Theme — Leisure Activity — Vacationing.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	152	98.1	98.1	98.1
yes	3	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 20. Theme — Philanthropy.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	137	88.4	88.4	88.4
yes	18	11.6	11.6	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 21. Theme — Romance.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	133	85.8	85.8	85.8
yes	22	14.2	14.2	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 22. Theme — Trend.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	138	89.0	89.0	89.0
yes	17	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 23. Theme — Sex.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	146	94.2	94.2	94.2
yes	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 24. Theme — Other.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	112	72.3	72.3	72.3
yes	43	27.7	27.7	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 25. Promotional — Hilton's Current Project.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	141	91.0	91.0	91.0
yes	14	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 26. Promotional— Hilton Product(s).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	67	43.2	43.2	43.2
yes	88	56.8	56.8	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 27. Promotional — Non-Hilton Products(s).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	138	89.0	89.0	89.0
yes	17	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 28. Promotional — Paris Product.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid best dressed/trendsetter	30	19.4	19.4	19.4
worst dressed/fashion victim	11	7.1	7.1	26.5
NA	114	73.5	73.5	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 29. Dress Ratings.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	120	77.4	77.4	77.4
yes	35	22.6	22.6	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 30. Evidence of Cost — High Cost — Expensive.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	134	86.5	86.5	86.5
yes	21	13.5	13.5	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 31. Evidence of Cost — High Cost — Exclusive.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	145	93.5	93.5	93.5
yes	10	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 32.0 Evidence of Cost — Low Cost — Inexpensive.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid no	148	95.5	95.5	95.5
yes	7	4.5	4.5	100.0
Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 33. Evidence of Cost — Low Cost — Non- Exclusive.

\*No frequencies present for "other" variable in promotional, dress ratings or evidence of cost values.